



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

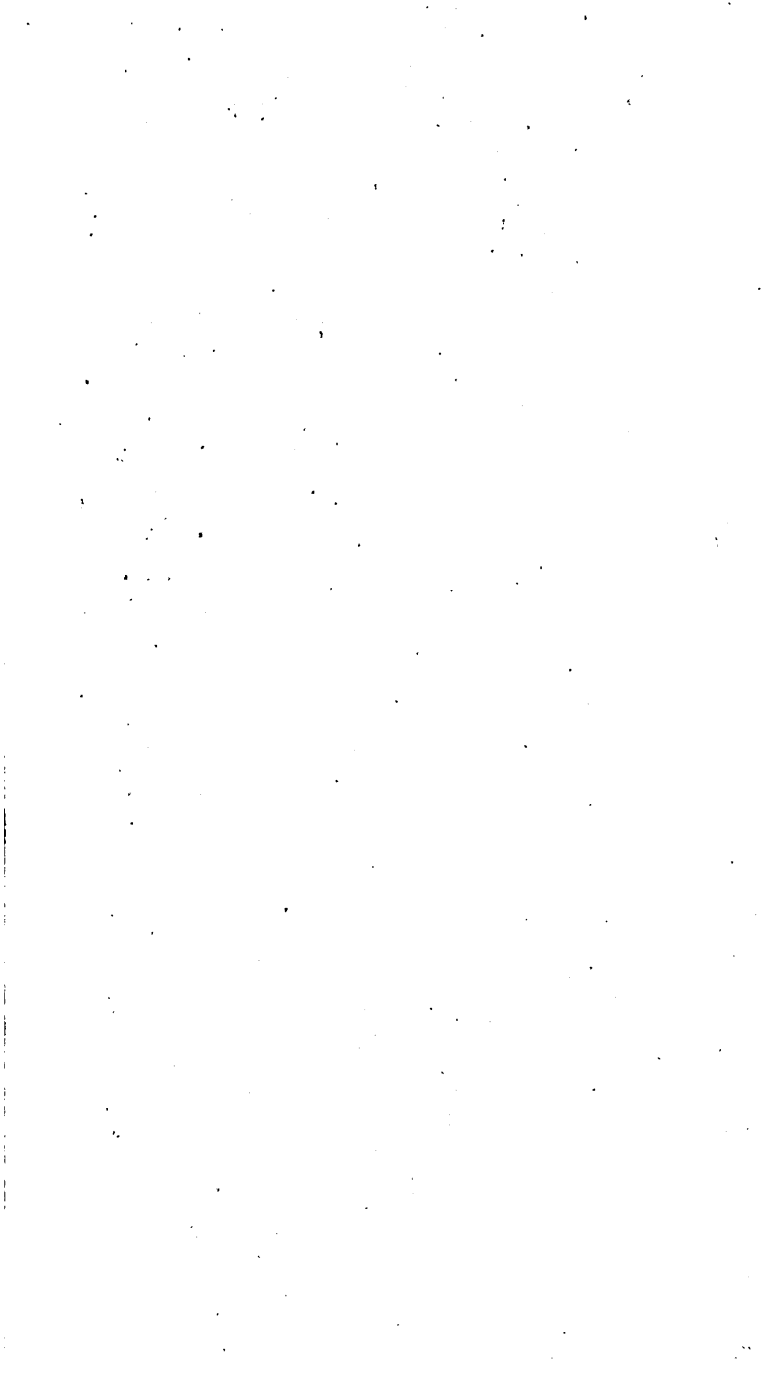
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

23455.14.5

**HARVARD COLLEGE
LIBRARY**



**FROM THE BEQUEST OF
GEORGE FRANCIS PARKMAN
(Class of 1844)
OF BOSTON**





WIDENER



HN N98D 7

WIDENER



HN N98D 7



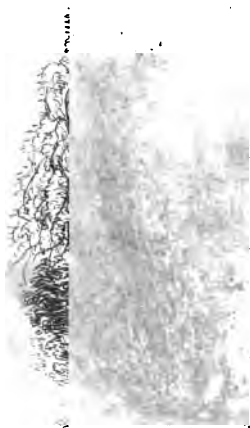


*"See where the smoke ascends from distant fires.
And Churches looming with their varied spires"*

RECEIVED
JAN 10 1904

My dear Mr. [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]





BIRMINGHAM.
A Poem
BY
Harry E. Horton;
AUTHOR OF
"Sutton Park" and other Poems.



2nd Edition,

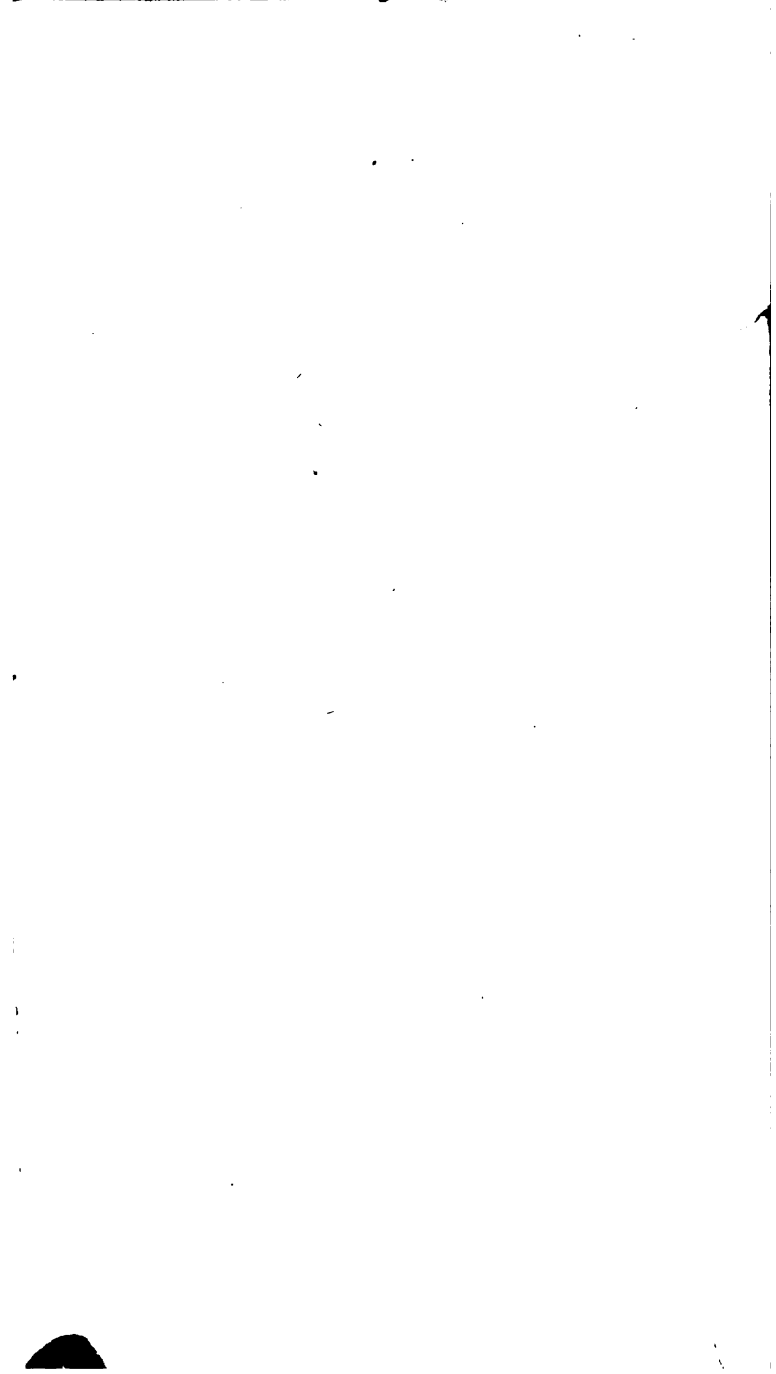
WITH APPENDIX.

Published & Sold for the Author by H. Winnall, High Street.

Birmingham,

AND SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & CO

LONDON.



BIRMINGHAM:

A Poem,

IN TWO PARTS,

WITH APPENDIX.

DEDICATED, BY PERMISSION, TO

WILLIAM SCHOLEFIELD, ESQ., M.P.,

BY

HARRY HOWELLS HORTON,

AUTHOR OF "SUTTON PARK," AND OTHER POEMS.

"Can measured lines these various buildings show—
The Town Hall turning, or the Prospect Row?
Can I the seats of want and wealth explore,
And lengthen out my lays from doos to door?"

CRABBE'S BOROUGH.

"Is it God that made Paris, London, St. Petersburg, Madrid? Is it God or man? No; permanent misery, periodical plague, and the poisoning of the atmosphere, are the work of men. God has made the golden clouds of heaven, the wild thyme and the moss, the bird and the wood, the flower of the field and the lily of the valley! Civilization has some rare palaces, and myriads of paltry dwellings; as it has rags for the mass, and cloth of gold and silk for its few favourites."

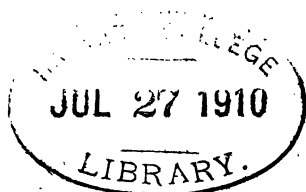
CONSIDERANT.

BIRMINGHAM:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY M. BILLING,
AND SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

1853.

23455.14.5



G. F. Parkman fund

TO

WILLIAM SCHOLEFIELD, ESQ., M.P.,

THIS

HUMBLE TRIBUTE IN VERSE TO THE IMPORTANT TOWN,

ONE OF WHOSE HONOURED

REPRESENTATIVES HE IS IN THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT,

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

WITH THE

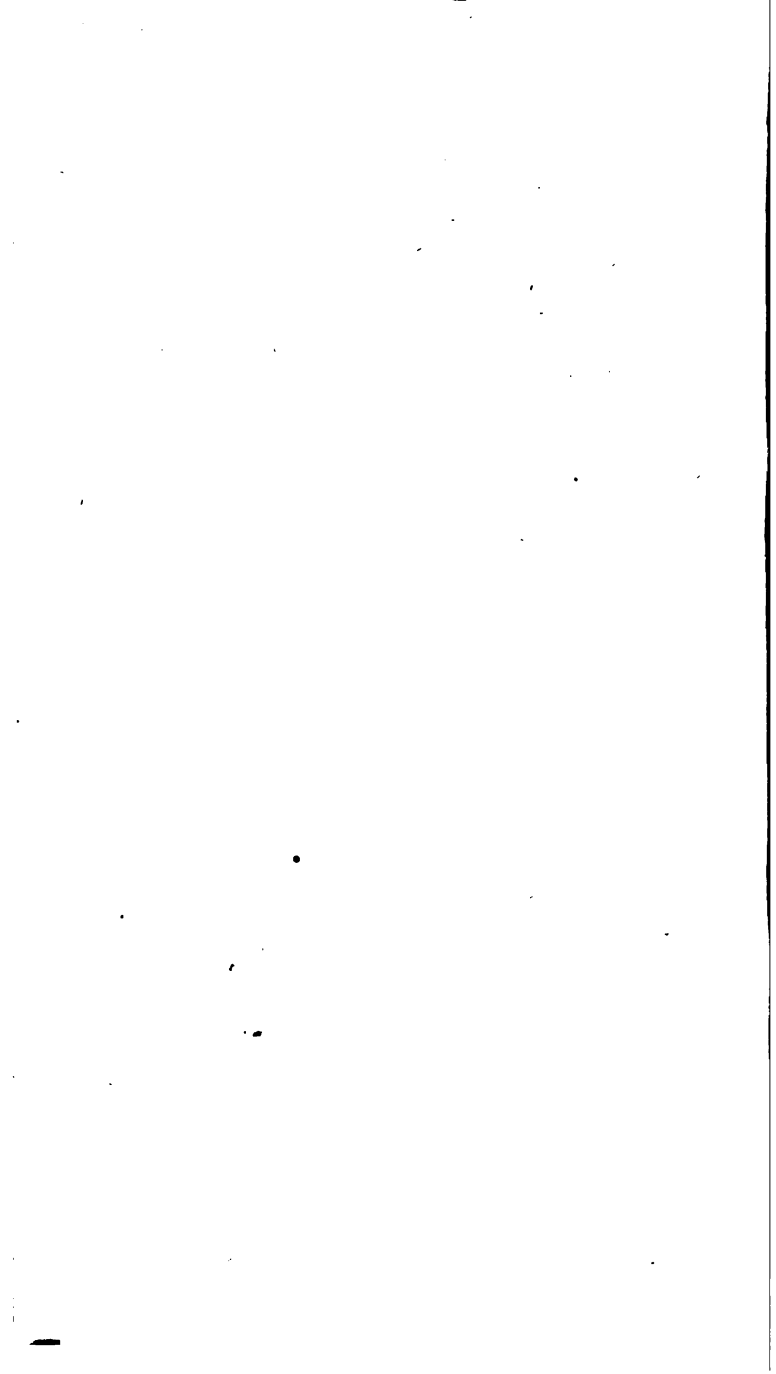
HIGHEST ESTEEM FOR THE TALENTS CONSPICUOUS

IN HIS PUBLIC LIFE,

AND RESPECT FOR HIS PRIVATE WORTH,

BY HIS OBEDIENT SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.



Preface.

In presenting a second edition of his little work to the public, the author has felt that additional responsibility devolved upon him, and has therefore exerted every effort to render it still more worthy of patronage. It will be seen that he has added a considerable amount of prose matter, and has made the manufactures a prominent feature of the work,—with a view of making it useful as well as interesting as a description of BIRMINGHAM.* In this he has been encouraged and assisted by a few kind friends, to whom he takes this opportunity of returning his grateful acknowledgments.† The task has necessarily involved much additional labour, which, with other avocations, has delayed the publication of his book: but it has been altogether “a labour of love,” the result of which he hopes will be as enjoyable to the reader. He has also made several additions and emendations in the text, which he trusts will not be unacceptable.

*The first Edition was published *before* the opening of the Great Exhibition: that event together with the prominent position which Birmingham then assumed as a manufacturing town, rendered some notice of her staple products absolutely necessary.

† The works from which the author has drawn much of the information contained in the prose part of his book are, two or three old “Histories of Birmingham,” prior to and also including Hutton, “The Penny Magazine,” “Dickens’ Household Words,” “The Leisure Hour,” &c.; but of course the greater part is the result of personal inquiry and a life-long residence in the locality.

Preface to the First Edition.

"BIRMINGHAM" may seem a singular title for a poem—and yet it will not be denied that it is as good and as appropriate as that of "LONDON," which formed the title of a poem, by Dr. Johnson, in the last century. Besides, if it is true, as Charles Lamb thought—that there is as much poetry in the town as in the country—it cannot be much out of place to choose the town of BIRMINGHAM for a title, unless, indeed, it can be shown that we have less of the sacred fire here than any other town can boast of. It must not be expected that a finished picture, or a full description of the town, will either be required or given. An artist, in making a painting of Birmingham, would seek to represent it, not in all its manufacturing detail, but in its most picturesque aspect; so, the author of the following poem must be understood as only undertaking to convey some of those poetical associations which draw their origin from, and have their "local habitation" in Birmingham.

The author has been induced to publish, as much from a recollection of the favour with which his former productions have been received, as from a desire to furnish a sort of *town* companion to "Sutton Park," (one of his former poems)—in which only the tranquil influences of that sequestered spot are celebrated, and the more active elements of social progress left unrecognised. This want he has, therefore, endeavoured to supply; and he is happy to say that the task was begun as much from the recommendations of friends, as from the suggestions of his own judgment; and it would have been accomplished long ere this, but for other and more pressing claims on his time and attention. As it is, however, he presents it to the public—asking their indulgence, and confident in the expectation that, if it be equal to its predecessor in merit, it will also rival it in success.

Introductory Remarks on Birmingham.

[In the first edition of this work the Author stated that he had prepared a brief historical sketch of the town, but that, owing to want of room, he was compelled to postpone its publication; he is now able to submit it to perusal.]

The town of Birmingham is said to be of very ancient origin, though I think it will hardly compare in this respect to some other towns, even in its own neighbourhood;* for such was its insignificance at one time, that, we are told, a letter would scarcely find it unless addressed as situated near to some other better known, because longer established city; as, for instance, Walsall, King's Norton, &c. Some curious antiquaries, judging from old accumulations of scoria and traces of abandoned coal-pits in the neighbourhood, have fixed upon Birmingham as the precise spot where the iron of the district was converted into "scythes fastened to chariots," and other warlike implements, described by Cæsar in his relation of the invasion of Britain by the Romans. This, however, is but a supposition, which is not at all strengthened by the fact which they adduce in its support, that the soil in every direction is underlaid with beds of coal, seeing that the art of smelting iron by means of coal was not discovered until the reign of James I. The quaint and sagacious historian, Mr. Hutton, has also taken a deal of pains in trying to connect Birmingham with a very remote antiquity, but I do not think he is borne out by facts. Unable to trace, by any authentic record, the existence of the present trade of the locality prior to

* "It is first noticed by Richard of Cirencester, as the Roman station *Bremenium*; and in Domesday Book (1086) by the name of 'Bermingham.' Dugdale, who supposed the name to have been received from some Saxon owner, compiled his history of Warwickshire previous to the discovery of Richard of Cirencester, in whose work it is recorded as *Bremenium*; consequently that great antiquarian must stand acquitted of ignorance upon the subject."—HISTORY OF BIRMINGHAM.

the sixteenth century, he indulges in an amusing series of conjectures—surmising that the aboriginal inhabitants of Britain may have defended themselves against the Roman conquerors with the aid of weapons forged at Birmingham. It is true that the neighbouring iron mines of Staffordshire were worked at a very early period, and that the local and geological characteristics of its site peculiarly adapted Birmingham for smelting ore; but the enthusiasm and ingenuity of Hutton must fail to establish all his suppositions, in the absence of written testimony, either in our copious national records, or other sources. All we know is, that the place described as “Bermengeham,” in the “Domesday Survey,” is not at all specially distinguished in that venerable compilation; that from the time of the Heptarchy to the reign of Henry VIII., the manor belonged to the family of De Bermingham; that the privilege of a weekly market was conferred upon the town before the Norman Conquest; and that as early as the twelfth century it had acquired some celebrity in the tanning of leather—a trade for which it continued subsequently famous, though it has now been long extinct as characteristic of the place. St. Martin’s Church is the only conspicuous vestige of antiquity left to us; and though confessedly a very ancient edifice, I cannot allow it to have been in existence much more than half the time claimed for it by Mr. Hutton. But this of course is mere matter of opinion, which can never be satisfactorily settled. We have no definite authority to appeal to, farther back than Leland, who lived in the time of Henry VIII., and who describes Birmingham as inhabited by smiths “who make knives and all sorts of cutting tools—by lorimers that make bittes, and a great many nail-ours.”* Camden describes “Breameham” as full of inhabit-

* As this first and quaint notice of our town may be interesting to the reader, I give it in the words of Leland himself:—“I came through a praty street or ever I entered Bermingham. This street, as I remember, is called Dyrtey (Deritend). In it dwell smiths and cutlers; and there

ants, and "echoing with forges," and adds that "most of the inhabitants be smiths;" so that the existence of even an extensive local manufacture, as early as the sixteenth century, is unquestionable.* We are told, indeed, that when William the Conqueror got possession of the crown, Birmingham was subject to Fitz-Auscult, whose seat was the Castle of Dudley. This man, who was a follower of the King of Normandy, no doubt took forcible possession of all he could lay his hands on: the village of Birmingham, if it could be said to have had an existence, would not be accounted of much worth. It is, however, doubtless, of Saxon origin, as its name appears to denote. In process of time it got into the hands of the De Berminghams (supposed to be an Irish family), who resided at the castle, surrounded by a moat, (of neither of which is any trace left), within bowshot south-west of the church, until the time of Henry VI., when Edward De Bermingham, the last of that ancient family, was tricked out of his possession by an artificer† of John Dudley, a favourite of the king, afterwards Earl of Warwick and Duke of Northumberland.

is a brooke that divides this street from Birmingham. The beauty of Birmingham, a good market town in the extreme parts of Warwickshire, is one street going up along, almost from the left ripe of the brook, up a mean hill, by the length of a quarter of a mile. I saw but one Paroch Church in the town. There be many smiths in the towne, that use to make knives and all manner of cutting tools, and many lorimers that make bittes, and a great many naylours; so that a great part of the town is maintained by smiths, who have their iron and sea coal out of Staffordshire."—CAMDEN'S "BRITANNIA."

* Perhaps the first indication of the practice of metal work is that afforded by the accounts of the churchwardens of Birmingham, for the year 1498; containing, as they do, the entry of a payment, "for repeyling" (repairing) the organs, to the organ-maker at "Bromicham"—an orthography, by the bye, which partially prevailed, and even governed the popular pronunciation, till the beginning of the last century.

† This artifice is well worthy of notice, not only as an illustration of the manners of the times, and the depth of villainy and duplicity connected with the incident itself, which seems almost to eclipse the doings of our most notorious modern highwaymen—but it is also interesting from the

It is some satisfaction to know that justice at last overtook this titled villain: he was attainted and beheaded in the reign of Mary, and his ill-gotten estates forfeited to the crown.

"Birmingham," says Macauley, "had not been thought of sufficient importance to send a member to Oliver's parliament; yet the manufacturers of Birmingham were already a busy and thriving race. They boasted that their hardware was highly esteemed, not indeed as now at Pekin and Lima, at Bokhara and Timbuctoo, but in London, and even as far off as Ireland. They had acquired a less honourable renown as coiners of bad money. In allusion to their spurious groats, the Tory party had fixed on demagogues who hypocritically affected zeal against Popery the nickname of 'Birminghams.' Yet in 1685 the population, which is now two hundred thousand, did not amount to four thousand." "A century and a half ago," says Hutton, "Birmingham, the grand toy-shop of Europe, was an insignificant market town, whose inhabitants never experienced the emanations of royal favour." This was perhaps owing to the decided part they took in favour of the Protector, in the civil war* between Charles I. and his parlia-

light it throws upon the comparative insignificance of our town, which, it will be seen, was only then considered as an appendage to Dudley. "This John Dudley, having possessed himself of Dudley Castle, cast his eye upon Birmingham as a most desirable object; but he was in a difficulty how to obtain it. Had he made proposals for purchasing it, he knew his offers would be rejected with scorn by the respectable family who had enjoyed its possession so many hundreds of years. He therefore laid a plan, by which he obliged some of his agents to take lodgings in the town, and so continue to ride out when they knew Edward De Bermingham was to go from home. One of them was to ride before, and the other to follow leisurely after, and join the said Bermingham's company. But being come up to their confederate, they forthwith set upon him for his purse, so that the villain thus seemingly robbed made pursuit after them, and Bermingham was apprehended as one of the gang. His life was only saved by the pretended friendship of Dudley, (who had influence with the king,) on condition of giving up the lordship of Birmingham to him."

* When the civil war broke out, the inhabitants of Birmingham declared warmly on the side of the Puritans; and they showed their devotion to the cause by supplying the parliamentary army with weapons.

ment, (for whose army they made swords,) and their hostility to Prince Rupert, who, irritated¹ by their harassing but hopeless resistance, set fire to the town, burning eighty houses, and levied a heavy fine upon the inhabitants, occasioning a loss of £30,000. Before this time, Birmingham, engaged in her various employments, maintained a strict neutrality in all the civil commotions that for centuries embroiled this unhappy land. The scanty population of the three streets of Birmingham was almost destroyed by the great plague of 1665. This and other calamities sadly retarded her prosperity. After the Restoration, she appears to have resumed her business habits; and, whether she was loyal or not, she prospered rapidly from that period. The luxurious frivolities of French taste, introduced during the reign of Charles II., were highly advantageous to Birmingham. The brass-toy trade, in which the town has ever since been unsurpassed, was established for the production of glittering trifles, in the shape of pouncets, pomanders, tags, étui-cases, and other appurtenances of personal vanity. I have often thought it must have been a beautiful little town about the time we are speaking of. Digbeth would form its principal street, and as you approached the Old Church up its ascent, a delightful scene would reveal itself. There would be all the variety of hill and vale, wood and water. The Old Moat on the left would be seen, with perhaps some remains of the Castle; between that and the Church would rise the Parsonage House, embowered in foliage—and the top of the hill, called the Bull-ring, would command an extensive amphitheatre of pastoral scenery. From the time to which we have referred, to the present, the trade of Birmingham has steadily increased. William III. was perhaps its greatest benefactor, in introducing two important, though widely different articles of production, namely—guns and

Their workshops furnished 15,000 sword-blades for the service of Cromwell's troopers, while not a hammer was lifted up in aid of the Royal party. How pleasing it is to find that even then the little town of our ancestors was conspicuous for its hatred of tyranny and oppression!

buckles. Lamenting the necessity of procuring the former from Holland, his Majesty was induced by a patriotic representative of Warwickshire (Sir R. Newdegate) to give to a Birmingham manufacturer a commission which laid the foundation of the local gun trade. "The revolution," says Hutton, "was remarkable for the introduction of William, of liberty, and of the minute buckle, not differing much in size and shape from the horse-bean. This offspring of fancy, like the clouds, is ever changing: the fashion of to-day is thrown into the casting-pot to-morrow. The buckle seems to have undergone every figure, size, and shape of geometrical invention; it has passed through every form in the whole zodiac of Euclid. The large square buckle is the *ton* of the present day. The ladies also have adopted the reigning taste: it is difficult to discover their beautiful white feet, covered with an enormous shield of buckle, and we wonder to see the active motion under the massive load. Thus the British fair support the Birmingham manufacturers—and thus they kill by weight of metal."*

Bishop Gibson, in his additions to Camden, in 1772, mentions, besides the "smiths" noticed by the latter, other artificers in iron and steel, whose performances were greatly admired both at home and abroad. Although the trade of Birmingham had given ample promise of future consequence about the time when Hutton published his history, (1781,) yet even he, sanguine as he was in his predictions, could not have anticipated its present greatness. Much of this is due to the general progress of the country, to improved means of transit, and other similar causes; but we must not overlook the efforts of such men as Boulton, Watt, John Taylor, Baskerville, Eginton, Murdock, Hardman, sen., Thomason, Priestley, and many more, the local aristocracy of talent at the close of the last

* Hutton supposes there were fifteen streets in Birmingham at the Restoration; and from that period to the year 1700 they were increased to twenty-eight.

century, who have been well seconded by the manufacturers of the present day.

There is nothing in the later history of Birmingham to which it is necessary to advert—except, perhaps, the riots of 1791, the establishment of the Political Union (in 1831), which gained the Reform Bill, and the Chartist Riots of 1839, which resulted in the organization of an efficient but expensive police force. These events have all been duly noticed elsewhere.

The town only assumed her great national importance within the last fifty years, during which time her trade and population have more than quadrupled themselves. The entire aspect, as well of the suburbs as of the town, has changed; more than a hundred miles of streets have stretched out into the fields and gardens in every direction. 50,000 houses, and 250,000 inhabitants are now gathered round the “one street going up a mean hill” of Leland; and countless factories, with their tall chimneys and puffing steam-engines, each surrounded by its little industrial army, are busy and toiling incessantly to supply every nook and corner of the world with the necessities and luxuries of civilized life. While thus engaged in providing the appliances of comfort and convenience to others, Birmingham has not been unmindful of the requirements of her home population. She is now a borough, sending two members to parliament—an incorporated city, with mayor, aldermen, and town councillors. She covers a larger area than any other town in the united kingdom, except the great metropolis. New buildings and new institutions have risen up, to meet the demands for increased knowledge and intellectual culture; handsome churches on noble sites now surround the “one parochchurch” of the old chronicler; and although there is much more to be done in this direction, care has been taken that the means of reasonable recreation shall not be wanting to the tens of thousands of her artificers of both sexes, let loose from toil at an early hour in

the evening. As an index of the progress made in her manufacturing importance, no better test can be found than the progressive increase of her population. In 1781, this was estimated at about 25,000; in 1831, this number had increased to 120,000; in 1841, to 182,894; and at the last census, 1851, to 202,634.* The products of her industry are exported to every part of the civilized globe—and her claims to notice were sufficiently acknowledged in the late “Exhibition of all Nations.” She is rapidly becoming the great centre of railroads; and now, like some of her own children who have suddenly risen to wealth and distinction, and whose origin may be considered questionable, she is busy in beautifying her appearance, and ridding herself of the traces of her original poverty and obscurity.†

* The progress of Birmingham in population and extent, within the last fifty years, is remarkable; resembling, not that of an old town in an old land, but the mushroom cities of the new world—the almost fabulous wonders of Australia or America. And this increase continues. A return of the building plans registered according to the Act, from January in last year till the end of March, 1853, a period of fifteen months, shows the following results:—

Houses	3,020	Sets of offices ..	3
Chapels	5	Flour mills	2
Schools	3	Saw mill	1
Warehouses	20	Foundry	1
Manufactories	20	Sets of shopping	13
Malthouses	4	New shop fronts	35
Stables	8	Alterations and additions ..	20

But in addition to this must be noted the hundreds of erections springing up on every side beyond the limits of the borough, which are connecting the town, by vast wildernesses of brick and mortar, with the agricultural districts of Worcestershire and Warwickshire on the one hand, and the great mining and manufacturing communities of South Staffordshire on the other. Little more than a century ago, the whole of Birmingham did not contain 4,000 houses—the growth of many ages, dating back to before the Conquest. Now, they add nearly that number to the 50,000 already existing, in the course of little more than twelve months.—BIRMINGHAM JOURNAL, APRIL 20, 1853.

† Hutton says:—“Birmingham, from its first formation, was never the habitation of a gentleman—the lords of the manor excepted. Gentlemen, as well as buttons, have been stamped here; but like them, when finished, are moved off.” A pleasant reflection for himself.

BIRMINGHAM:

A Poem.

PART I.

ONCE more the world's inglorious toils I quit—
Once more within my humble closet sit.
Here, while withdrawn from its interior strife,
I fain would paint the "many-coloured" life
Of the great town*—with its increasing claims,
Its rising domes majestic, and its names,,
Whose glory Fame has trumpeted, and Time,
With iron pen, writ in his scroll sublime :
Its wonders, follies, triumphs I would tell—
Where its true greatness and its weakness dwell :
Show there are evils lurking 'neath its pride,
Which all its prosperous commerce fails to hide :
That social maladies are but o'erlaid
By the thin glare and bustle of our trade.
Once more, my pen—my comfort and my curse !
Thy aid I seek, to frame the flowing verse ;

• Birmingham.

To move obedient to the mind's behest,
And bid each thought in tuneful words be drest.
For 'tis in song as oft it is in prayer—
Utt'rance relieves the heart, and soothes its care ;
But if in silence we would nurse the wound,
It festers soon, and spreads contagion round.
The pen, that wondrous instrument of thought,
By which mankind for ages have been taught—
Whose power has ruled the masses of our land,
Beyond the sway that monarchs could command—
Befriends the musing poet in his need,
And gives the world the thought-inspiring seed :
Upon the page, with heaven-directed power,
It blooms or fades, an intellectual flower :
And as the gem that lately slept in earth
Is made by skill to shine with added worth—
So by the pen each thought is made to reign,
That else had slumber'd in th' unconscious brain.
Yet hard the fate of those who, forc'd to seek
Precarious sustenance from week to week,
By daily toiling at the mine of thought,
Until its powers to barrenness are wrought—
Until at last the " palace of the soul,"
That glorious fabric Time can scarce controul,
Yields, like a splendid ruin, to decay :
The law of earth, which all things must obey.
But though thus sink the energies of mind,
Its lightning-flashes leave their trace behind :
The pen can seize, with photographic power,
The blaze of genius in its happiest hour—

Translate its beauty to the living page,
And bid it bloom through many a future age.

I, who erewhile of Nature's beauties sung,*
Would tell the glories that to Art belong :
How, nursed in cities, it hath shed its light,
Dimly at first, but now with splendour bright,
It reigns triumphant—Empress of the town,
Where it doth sit with its terrestrial crown.
But here no gentle images infuse
Those pleasing thoughts which fascinate the muse :
No rippling streams their murmuring song impart,
To lend an inspiration to the heart :
No rural objects here delight the eye—
Verdure around, or fields of blue on high :
No sweet embowering walks around are seen,
Draped in the summer's livery of green :
No whispering wood, or liquid note of bird,
No hum of bee—or sound of gladness heard.
All that in nature can delight and cheer—
All that the poet's fancy holds most dear,—
All is denied, and scarce remembered here.
But lo ! from every brief ascending height,
A wilderness of chimneys mocks the sight ;
The hammer's constant din, and noises rude,
With ceaseless sound, upon the ear intrude ;
In vain to long-known haunts affection turns,
As with another theme the bosom burns ;

* In "Sutton Park."

The cities' pride now claims the votive lay—
The harp is strung already to obey;
And while the joys of rural life I own,
I sing the meaner blessings of the town.

Yet thy blest spirit, Poetry, we trace—
Or in the shop, or in the market-place—
Where'er the flame divine lights up the human face.
No factory's gloom, nor dull mechanic life,
Nor competition's keen and bitter strife,
Can e'er extinguish that celestial spark,
Which glows in every breast, and through the dark
And vicious walks of life grows to a flame,
That warms and humanises dens of shame :
Where'er the heart of human nature beats—
There her soft tale the heavenly nymph repeats.
See ! where the weeping mother's forced to leave
Her infant charge—each day to toil and grieve :
She lingering turns to press its cheek once more,
And hurries back, when labour's day is o'er.
The child, too, in its tender years compelled
To ask the pittance that each week may yield ;
With joy the little treasure home she takes,
That heart to soothe she knows too often aches.
And in the kindly offices of love
Distils a peace the reach of want above—
Makes e'en their squalid hearth to them more dear,
By its remembered griefs and loving tear—
The shrine of their poor modicum of peace,
When evening bids the toils of sorrow cease.

In each a message from the skies we own,
In all we trace the poetry of town.

First, then, to thee,* thou pride of modern days.
To thee the muse attunes her votive praise ;
Thou from whose sons new wonders daily spring,
Whose fame o'er earth is ever on the wing :
Invention's seat, where first her powers begin
To shape an engine—or to mould a pin ;
Where the rude artists of a former age
Help'd Britain's sons the desperate war to wage—
Made every weapon† which subdued the foe,
And carried death with every savage blow.
There guns and swords, alas ! are fashion'd still,
With speedier method, and superior skill ;
There still the anvil echoes as of yore,
And brings the same prosperity, or more :
The town that's built upon an iron bed‡
Need not the changes of the future dread ;
For science, aided by industrial skill,
Bends every stubborn metal to its will ;
And gold and silver, glittering from the mine,
Are wrought to other purposes than coin :
To deck the brow of beauty, and impart
To rank and wealth the gorgeous badge of art.

* Birmingham.

† “ There are many smiths in the town, that use to make knives and all manner of cutting tools.”—LELAND.

‡ “ The town, that was built on iron, mingled in its elements the ages of gold and iron.”—*Speech of Mr. INGERSOLL, the American Minister, at the Royal Hotel, Birmingham.*

Lead, copper, tin, and all the ores of earth,
Are wrought to useful forms, and issue forth ;
Or with deceptive gloss they pass in trade,
And gain a place for which they were not made.
Thy name, though here unfitted for a rhyme,
Shall yet be honour'd in the rolls of time :
'Twas by thy aid that beauteous fabric* rose,
Which England's mem'ry never more may lose,
Beneath whose crystal roof all nations vied,
And every town its rival gifts supplied.
Then did the " Hardware Village" proudly share
The laurels which she still in peace may wear :
Then did thy sons for skill distinguished stand :
Then was thy praise re-echo'd through the land.
How oft, when absence forced thee from my sight,
Would I recall thy features with delight !
And by the light of memory fondly trace
The dusky streets and buildings of the place ;
The Old Church spire, the Bull-ring's toilsome
hill,
The Market Hall, and New Street, grander still :
So strong the impress on the youthful mind
Of all those images which first entwined
Their magic round the brain, and made them seem
Th' essential forms of every blissful dream !
For there are charms that centre in the town,
Pursuits and pleasures that are all its own :

* The glass and iron of the " Crystal Palace" were produced at Chance's Glass Works, and Fox and Henderson's London Works, Smethwick, near Birmingham.

'Tis there our powers are first educed, and bloom—
There each its varied office may assume.

'Tis social life that forms its cheerful bond,
And makes affection's memory still more fond ;
For who that's tasted friendship's feast of joy
Can bear the hand's cold press, th' averted eye,
When some once-lov'd one seems to pass us by ?

* * * * *

Come, thou fond Ariel of my dreamy brain,
Resume thy sway, and charm me once again ;
Lift me in fancy on St. Philip's* height,
Whence oft my boyish spirit winged its flight ;
Then through the mist aid thou my lengthening
gaze,

To note the wonders of the town's vast maze—
View every beck'ning feature of the scene.
Tell what it is, and what it once has been ;
Or, prophet-like, upon the future dwell,
And of its promise and its marvels tell.
See ! where the smoke in volumes dense aspires,
And constant burn the manufactory's fires ;
There Vulcan's sons shape out the smelted ore—
There glass is blown which ne'er had shape before ;
And nearer still, the implements of war,
Destined to spread destructive waste afar,

• See Appendix, Note 1.

Are fashioned ;—ah ! when will such commerce
cease,

And all our products gild the reign of peace ?*
Soon may the direful love of bloodshed end,
And o'er the world the olive-branch extend.
E'en now a milder spirit gains with men,
E'en now the sword is yielding to the pen ;
The pen metallic, whose new fame will crown
The peaceful glory of our modern town—
Form a new staple, as sweet knowledge spreads,
Displacing bullets for the people's heads.

On every side invention's sons are found,
On every side are honours shower'd around ;
Success doth now the hopes of genius crown,
And added lustre falls upon the town.
Patents abound where'er we turn our gaze,
And every day some rival claims the bays.
Buttons,† to gem and beautify the dress,
Whose uses now all nations must confess ;
Gilt toys,‡ designed to decorate the fair,
With taste exquisite formed, and nicest care ;
And jewell'd rings, whose brilliance wakens pride,
Which e'en the tiny finger may not hide ;
And, as if more her empire to maintain,
We make the diamond pin,§ and costly chain
Of gold, or other metal taught to wear
Its likeness, in a coat of gilding bare :

* See Appendix, Note 2.

† *Ibid.*, Note 3.

‡ *Ibid.*, Note 4.

§ *Ibid.*, Note 5.

Electro-plate,* that power of modern birth,
 Which clothes inferior metals with new worth ;
 The myriad forms that glass† is taught to take,
 Since drawn all liquid from the fiery lake.
 Then with its claims the papier-mâché ‡ comes,
 In shining jet, to beautify our homes.
 Useful and ornamental forms in brass,§
 Of various size, before our vision pass,
 Pens,|| pins, and thimbles, screws, nails, hooks and
 eyes,
 Swords,¶ guns, percussion-caps—our town sup-
 plies :
 Saws,** iron-bedsteads, stoves, the world to bless ;
 Locks,†† lamps, and tin-plate ware, upon us
 press.
 But not alone on hardwares we depend,
 To other staples now our arts extend :
 Each product that industrial skill can raise
 Meets the delighted stranger's wondering gaze.
 The mill, the forge, the foundry—all are here,
 And their bold fronts the manufactories rear.
 Among the foremost stand those works of fame,‡‡
 Whose uses now a *Universe* may claim,
 Where manual labour's utmost skill is brought
 By wonder-working Science down to naught.
 Where vast machines the fibrous mass combine,
 And hemp assumes the forms of rope and twine.

* See Appendix, Note 6.

† *Ibid.*, Note 9.** *Ibid.*, Note 12.‡ *Ibid.*, Note 7.|| *Ibid.*, Note 10.†† *Ibid.*, Note 13.‡ *Ibid.*, Note 8.¶ *Ibid.*, Note 11.‡‡ *Ibid.*, Note 14.

Where'er we turn we see machinery spread,
And poor mechanics need not ask for bread,*
The busy tribes of industry abound,
We see them labour, or we hear the sound ;
While taper spires and towering forms suggest
That midst this world of business there is rest.

Oh ! shade of Hutton, from thy still retreat
Come, and recount the history of each street ;
Walk with me where antiquity doth hide,
Though Fashion blazon forth a fair outside ;
Help me amid Time's havoc still to trace
Those marks which e'en its dust could ne'er erase ;
And in return I'll show those marvels new,
Which modern skill has summon'd into view—
Those pyramids of science and of art
At which our fathers with surprise would start.
Oh ! could'st thou witness what this age has done
To change and beautify thy favorite town,
How would'st thou rub thy unbelieving eyes,
As if with doubt, perplex'd at the surprise !
How with a curious search each pile would scan,
Where once some ancient lane or alley ran.
And as thy spirit look'd bewilder'd round,
The engine's scream would scare thee with its
 sound—
Quick to thy rest aghast thou wouldst retreat,
Nor dare again the visit to repeat.

* See Appendix, Note 15.

Though London's vaster wonders may comprise
Far nobler claims, to less indulgent eyes—
Still, round the humbler city of my birth
Fond memories hover, of peculiar worth.
For what are all the vanities of sight—
The blaze of fashion, or of wealth the might,
Compar'd with that strange world within the breast
Where all the treasur'd past is taught to rest?
Can I forget the hour of life's young morn?—
That sunny dream that never may return—
When round our humble hearth affections grew
Like flowers unfolding, and as beauteous too;
Soon to be withered 'neath the glare of day,
Crushed by rude feet, and hastening to decay.
But ah! who has not, in life's busy hour,
Paused to call up in thought the beauteous flower
Which still blooms on, embalmed within the soul,
And sheds a fragrance earth can ne'er controul?
'Tis like some once-loved note, by time made
 dear,
Whose sweetness hangs on memory's partial ear;
So through the vista of the past arise,
To glad the care-worn heart with pictur'd joys,
Scenes which around the retrospect will cling,
And o'er its tints a shade of sadness fling,
Making this modern wilderness to bear—
A thousand fruits the mind delights to share.

How memory loves again to light each spot,
By time dismantled, or by men forgot!

Where 'mid the ruin she can take her stand,
Like some magician with his conquering wand,
And all its glory once again command.
Methinks again those verdant meads I see
Where oft I loitered on the banks of Rea,
(Our only tribute to the far-off sea.)
I can imagine still the plot of green,
Where yonnder range of shopping now is seen ;
The garden too, its pales of wood before,
(Which oft in fruit-time I have clambered o'er,)
I can call up, though it is seen no more.
Again I turn to those remembered hours
When life first strewed my infant path with flowers :
The dwelling where those warehouse piles remain
My busy fancy peoples once again :
From her cold grave a mother's spirit calls
And bids her rule again within those walls.
I see her with her look of matron pride :
I hear her call me once more to her side.
I look again, and ah ! how changed the scene,
All, all is gone—not e'en a patch of green
Is left, to tell the stranger what it's been.*

Time was, ere Alfred's fame had reached its bloom,
This city's site was but a heath of broom ;†

* The spot here alluded to is in Barford Street, now in the occupation of Messrs. Atkin and Sons, Saw Manufacturers. The house and premises were originally built by the Author's Father.

† This is supposed by Hutton and other historians to have been the origin of the name of the town, which was at first *Broomwoycham*—(pronounced Brummagem) designating what were once the character-

And ages prior, 'tis said the waters rolled*
 Where now the wond'rous "toy-shop" we behold.
 Ah! then, when silence brooded o'er the wave
 And earth retained the features nature gave;
 When only eyes of brighter, deeper ken,
 Could view the future dwelling-place of men;
 When no glad voice was heard upon the shore,
 Its strains of joy or gratitude to pour—
 Then did the sound of prophecy proclaim
 Athwart this region all its destined fame—
 Then the decree (which time has near fulfilled)
 Was heard around, and earth's deep caves were
 thrilled,
 That on the spot where solitude could weep,
 The sons of industry one day should reap
 The harvest of their toils:† the womb of earth
 Nursed then the elements which form the worth,

istics of the place, being a union of the words *Brom*, signifying broom or heath, *Wych*, a village or small town—and *Ham*, a home or residence. The lower classes still call it by this name, with occasional variations, such as *Birnigam*, *Bubbygam*, and even *Bubbygub*; while the better educated write and pronounce it *Birmingham*, which is the modernized form of *Bermyngham*, under which appellation it was known in the early part of the last century.

"The late Mr. Hamper, an inhabitant of Birmingham, and a man of great antiquarian research, asserts that the name of this town has been spelt by different writers and at different times in no less than 140 different ways.*** The late Dr. Parr, and more than one eminent literary man of the present day, pronounce it as if written Bromicham."—PENNY MAGAZINE, January, 1836.

* This is a hypothesis of some geologists, by which they account for the deep bed of red sandstone on which the town is built—but, without subscribing to it, we may take it for what it is worth.

† See Appendix, Note 16.

The glory of man's greatness : long he groped
Darkling his path,—as one who vainly hoped
To solve life's problem—till the heavenly ray,
Fell on his soul, and lit the rugged way.
Few schools or dwellings then around were seen,
And these were clustered near the OLD CROSS
green.

Within the gloomy Priory* was confin'd
The only light of knowledge to the mind.
Then young St. Martin's† reared her tapering
head,

(Which hangs at last on Time's permitting
thread,)

Beneath whose shade repose the peaceful dead,
Till generations swelled the incumbent earth,
And gave the tomb-pressed churchyard sacred
worth.

For ages 'twas the edifice alone
Our Saxon ancestors could call their own :
There did they meet, their simple faith to prove,
There breathed the fervour of devotion's love.
To pompous forms religion was confin'd,
And priestly dominance usurped the mind ;

* The Priory was founded in the early reigns of the Norman kings, by the Birminghams, lords of the manor of Birmingham, and was called the Hospital of St. Thomas; the priest being bound to pray for the souls of the founders every day, to the end of the world. Of this Priory Hutton says, "It is a matter of surprise, that none of those religious drones, the monks who lived in it for fifteen or twenty generations, ever thought of indulging posterity with a history of Birmingham." I think it a matter of regret, but not of surprise at all.

† See Appendix, Note 17.

For by the church the soul was claimed from
birth,

And death resigned the body to its earth :
Thus did it gain o'er thought and wealth a power
Which time has ne'er subverted to this hour.
Though innovators may have seized their lands,
The cards have only passed to other hands ;
And, if we're plundered of our rights, at least
It matters not, by clergyman or priest.

Yet do I venerate th' enduring pride
With which that towering structure has defied
The storms of centuries—though it rocks at last,
And scarce can stand against the warring blast.
Scath'd by old Time, its form it still doth rear,
Soon to be numbered "'mong the things that were."
I love the venerable fabric still,
Witness alike of Saxon heart and skill :
By that I see my rude forefathers' hand,
Whose cunning modern art could ne'er command ;
Its beauty lives—despite the tooth of time,
A monument of ancient art sublime :
It seems to link us with the Saxon age—
But dimly trac'd in history's doubtful page,
And makes us of remotest times a part,
Where the long annals of our fathers start.
It saw the struggles of the infant town
To gain by industry a fair renown,
And echoed back the clinking anvil's sound,
When workshops sprung its youthful form around ;

Its bells, with lively or with solemn peal,
Announced whate'er the country's heart might feel :
Its music swelled the echo o'er the land,
When the great Norman chief did first command
His warlike host upon our startled strand ;
And when at Runnymede monarchic pride
Was with indignant energy defied,
Its iron tongue rang joyful far and wide.
The ancient structure saw the flames ascend,
When Rupert's* fire extended to Dale End ;
And heard the cannon's loud, terrific roar,
Fright th' adjacent hills and distant shore,
When Cromwell's cavalry just made a call,
And left a *heavy* card at Aston Hall.

Oh ! could we lift the curtain of the past,
And pierce the shades that gently have o'ercast
Things that were triumphs in their passing day,
As yonder spire assumed its tint of grey—
What wondrous deeds of men might then be known,
The unrecorded annals of the town.
But soon will cease its grandeur, like a dream,
Which throws o'er life a mystic, mocking beam ;
Decay has set his finger on each stone,
And Ruin only waits to claim her own.
Emblem of human pride, it soon must fall—
No power may long sustain its tottering wall.
Another pile will rear its lofty form—
Again invite the eye, and brave the storm ;

* See Appendix, Note 18.

Until its solemn tones shall call no more
 The people's hearts to worship as of yore.*
 'Twas here religion's battle first was waged ;
 Here that the people, by the fraud enraged,
 Against their pious foes at last engaged.
 Honour'd for ever be the names of those
 Who, strong in truth, against the Church arose,
 And, with unflinching courage, dared withstand
 Her ever grasping and rapacious hand.
 Despite her canon laws, and eke the state,
 They called that plunder which she called a rate.
 Muntz, Pare, and Trow, the foremost in the
 fight,
 Suffer'd, but conquer'd, in the cause of right.
 Since then the good old town has been exempt
 From pious frauds, its hatred and contempt.

Is this a branch of that celestial tree,†
 Planted by him who died to make us free ;
 And who to Mammon never bent the knee ?

* In this remark I would not be thought to depreciate what the Church has done and what it is still doing in this Parish, by the active agency of its present excellent Rector ;—but I believe myself that all this will tend, in time, to make men enlightened Christians, instead of mere church-goers.

† “ As the government needed the support of the Protestants, so the Protestants needed the protection of the government. Much was therefore given up on both sides ; an union was affected ; and the fruit of that union was the Church of England.” — MACAULAY'S HISTORY OF ENGLAND—to which I would refer those who contend for the divine origin of the Church of England. He shows that it sprang out of a *political* compromise.

Who for the world and sinners lived and died,
Succoured the guilty, and admonished pride :
Our friend, example, ransom, counsel, guide.

A thought, far sadder than the baleful cloud
That doth the light of vernal morn enshroud,
O'ercomes me here.—Haply that ancient pile,
So long held sacred by the sons of toil,
Though claiming the Great Teacher's hand and
seal,

Has never known his spirit to reveal :
And hence the solemn worship of the soul
Is made a form within the priest's controul.
Can I delight in temples made with hands,
When the blue canopy of heaven commands
My inmost worship and my deepest love ?
For with its song and beauty it doth move
Ever my longing and encumbered soul,
Which fain would burst its bonds, and soar with-
out controul.

Oh ! that mankind could once be taught to know
That love, not creeds, makes happiness below ;
That the poor wretch, despised by men' on
earth,

Is, in the eye of Heaven, of holier worth
Than all the temples ever formed by man,
Since sacerdotal influence began ;
For he has that within, the world can never
From its Great Architect in spirit sever ;

And though amid life's filthy mire he's trod,
He still walks forth the image of his God.
To aid the sufferer in this world of care,
And make his future brighter promise wear,
Is far more beauteous in the sight of heaven
Than all the creeds and dogmas ever given ;
And the fit prelude to a heavenly sphere,
Is to do justly by each other here.
If He who made us could but see us share
Our neighbour's joy, contentment, sorrow, care,
He could dispense with other forms of prayer.*

It was not thus, when truth was taught to trace
To high-church zeal the town's first deep disgrace ;
When civil discord reared her furious head,
And in religion's name destruction spread :
Then the fierce yell of bigotry was heard,
Then christian hearts to evil deeds were stirr'd ;
Against the laws of conscience and of right,
The angry crowd opposed the force of might :
No priest anointed rose the storm to quell—
The Church unmoved surveyed the work of hell.
The flame once kindled, demon passions reign,
And reason's tears expostulate in vain ;
Th' exultant mob now wave the fiery brand,
And flushed Rebellion takes her dread command.

* "He prayeth best who loveth best
All things, both great and small :
For the dear God, who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."—ANCIENT MARINER.

'Twas then the orthodox alone enjoyed
Secure that peace which others were denied ;
The few who loved the truth, or dared to think,
Were brought with cruel haste to ruin's brink ;
Whate'er of wealth wise forethought had supplied,
Was rudely seized, and by the flames destroyed.
Nor with their homesteads did the havoc cease,
It reached those houses sacred to the peace
Which flows from pure devotion's hallowed source,
Where persecution may not spend its force.
Ah! then, despoil'd of all he held most dear,
(The mournful tale will still recall a tear,)
The venerable Priestley had to feel
Those scorns and sorrows time can never heal :
Pillaged, oppressed, in vain he looked around—
His chapel razed, his home no longer found ;
The valued fruits of all his studious toil
Were swept away, or buried 'neath the pile.
The faithful flock he long had watched with love
Now his sole hope and only comfort prove :
But soon he turns indignant from the town,
On which he'd shed an undeserved renown ;
And while he feels, thus ruthlessly oppress'd,
A calm, unfailing solace in his breast,
He seeks at last a foreign land and sphere,
And finds that peace which we denied him here.*
So has it been, in every clime and age—
Alike insulted—hero, saint, and sage :

* See Appendix, Note 19.

So, when the Son of Man himself appeared,
E'en on the cross he was rebuked and speared ;
And, ah ! should he but walk our earth again,
Seeking to spread his pure, benignant reign,
He still would suffer from a life of pain.

Oh ! of all bondage that is surely worst,
The most degrading, and the most accurst,
Which chains the mind to sect, and from the heart
Bids every generous sentiment depart :
Though even nature prompt us to be kind,
The creed-encumbered brain is dull and blind
To all those thoughts which elevate the mind.

But let us not forget the tribute due
To other piles that loom within our view.
St. Philip's church, though old, still bears the
crown,

The Attic pride and beauty of the town :
Grandeur peeps out, despite its crumbling walls,
While for repair its towering dome still calls ; *
Its site commanding, and its spacious ground,
Whose walks, in order sweet, the trees surround,
Combine to mark its features with a grace
We vainly seek in any other place.
And not alone St. Philip's, but St. Paul's,
With form of beauty, for attention calls :
Chaste in its structure, happy in its site—

* This was written before the late repairs were undertaken.

Though not aspiring to unmeasured height—
It long has been our pride and our delight.

Quaint is the pile* where first I learnt to pray,
In somewhat careless mood, each Sabbath day;
When early childhood made the task appear
Less and less welcome to my wearied ear;
Forced by parental rule to note the text,
Though ever by the sermon more perplexed.
But ne'er, ah! ne'er will Time's oblivious stream
Drown the remembrance of that infant dream,
Which music's charm within my bosom wove,
When first its young pulsations beat to love.
'Twas there a maiden's voice, in notes divine,
Called me to worship at an earthly shrine;
There the sweet magic every sense o'ercame,
And woke at last devotion's hallowed flame:
But soon she vanished, like a vision fair,
And only left her memory hovering there. †

The spot where once an armed force was seen, ‡
Encamped upon the hill, no longer green,
Is now made sacred by a beauteous pile,
For modern worship built, in Gothic style.
I saw its form in gradual beauty rise,
And heard its maiden choir address the skies:
But little thought I, when, in boyhood's spring,
Around its walls my playful heart would cling,

* St. Bartholomew's Chapel.

† See Appendix, Note 20.

‡ See Appendix, Note 21.

That time, that stern admonisher of joy,
Would call me there to breathe a filial sigh
O'er one who oft my infant form had prest,
Ere life had woke me from that dreamless rest.
Her sacred dust, commingling with the earth,
Lends to the spot a melancholy worth,
And bids me now, forgetful of the hour—
That golden season, when grief's wasting power
Had never reached my heart—to turn a thought
To those unburied memories, which are fraught
With saddest tales of sorrow; when life's dream
Had lost its hallowed, peace-illum'd beam;
When she who gave me birth was called away,
And left me, sad and pensive, to the fray
Which still awaits me in my dark career;
None to console me left, and none to cheer.
Her ashes seem to consecrate the spot—
No matter if the fane * be orthodox or not.

See! where the smoke ascends from distant
fires,
And churches, looming with their varied spires;
O, could we view such symbols as the sign
Of all that's happy, prosp'rous, and divine!
Then would the growing limits of the town
Awake new hopes which every day would crown.
Methinks a city in an age like this,
With all its large appliances of bliss—

* Trinity Chapel, which has been by some persons strongly suspected
of a leaning towards Puseyism.

With trade to bind each class in mutual trust,
And priests to guide, and raise us from the dust—
Should mirror in its depths that placid love,
Which rules the star-lit harmony above ;
Should picture forth to heaven's approving eye,
The beauty of earth's happiness—the joy
Kindred to itself, unmixed with sorrow,
Which might not comfort from affection borrow,
Save when Death's hand had dimmed Hope's
brighter morrow.

There was a time, ere wealth, with power allied,
Had fostered rank, and fixed the reign of pride—
When the glad heart its equal rights could claim,
Nor grudge a brother's title to the same.
Affection's law then held its kindred sway,
And every man its promptings could obey :
When ill befell the stranger and the poor,
Its voice found entrance at each neighbour's
door ;

And though religion's guise was less assumed,
The flowers of virtue more maturely bloomed ;
On the strong soil of nature they had grown,
Ere yet the church its ill-got power had known :
They needed not the priest's approving nod—
Implanted early by the hand of God.

But let us not, upon the Church intent,
Forget to pay our tribute to Dissent ;
For 'tis to this we owe the high renown
And independent spirit of the town :

To this is due the honour we achieved
When from the church-rates we the poor relieved:
Its influence lends a healthful moral tone,
For which we stand unequalled and alone.
Who can forget its long and useful reign,
Enthron'd alike in Bond Street* and Carr's
Lane?

Who would withhold the homage now its due?
Who would deny its mission to be true?
When it can boast a "bishop"† and a head,
Who fifty years his willing flock has led;
Who, undefiled by riches or by fame,
Is still in labour and in love the same;
His unspent energies devoted all
To one great task, in answer to his call.
'Twas was from his lips I first was taught to know
That life is vanity, the world a show;
That there's a brighter region in the skies,
To which he trained my youthful hopes to rise:
And when by trouble or misfortune pressed,
I've proved him true to what he has professed.
What though he only knows one narrow way,
And his poor flock may go at times astray?

* The allusion here is to the REV. T. MORGAN, who for many years discharged the duties of Pastor at this Chapel. One of his sons is Town Clerk; another is also in the profession of the law.

† The REV. J. A. JAMES, facetiously called the Bishop of Carr's Lane. He is the oldest-standing of any christian minister in Birmingham. His consistent conduct, throughout a period of nearly half a century—his classic eloquence, alike persuasive, earnest, searching, and abounding in touches of poetic and truthful illustration—render him one of the most useful and popular preachers of the day.

Still let us venerate the earnest man,
Who ends his honoured life as he began.

Amid the varied sects the truth who claim,
And live discordant in religion's name,
There wanted one the wearied heart to move,
And rouse its nature up to deeds of love.
(What, without this, are all our forms and creeds ?
What all the solemn shams deception breeds ?
The flower of virtue never can expand
While truth is thus diluted through the land.)
The want was felt by many a thoughtful mind
That looked with loving faith upon mankind ;
The pure devotion which from reason flows
The asking heart had claimed—when Dawson rose,
To shed upon the stream a brighter ray,
And guide it gently on its earthly way.
His teaching was from nature* not from lore—
He touched a chord which none had touched before.
The people pressed, his searching words to hear ;
Fluent, yet simple—earnest, yet severe.
Conversions sprang around on every side—
His rising fame was echoed far and wide ;
And as Napoleon, hero of his time,
Rose at the call of France, with power sublime,

* “ Well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.”—WORDSWORTH.

So did the lesser star of Dawson shine,
 In answer to a summons more divine :
 So shines he still, as when he first arose,
 And 'neath his beams the soul expanding grows :
 He breaks the shadows that obscured its worth,
 And bids the human flower in nature's pride stand
 forth.

Our modern faith is one of abstract creed—*
 It doth not bloom in life, in thought, or deed ;
 For money men their nice distinctions lose—
 Jews are like Christians, Christians are but Jews :
 So strong, so potent is this love of self—
 So prone the fallen heart to worship pelf—
 That few are proof against its syren sway,
 The Golden Calf still rules, and all obey.
 And why should sects be formed, and churches
 built,

When all around is misery and guilt?
 Methinks I hear the voice of God proclaim
 Such soulless worship insult to his name :
 That while the poor we still neglect to raise,
 He looks with scorn upon our prayer and praise.†

*“Either christianity—absolute religion—is false and utterly detestable, or else modern society in its bases and details is wrong, all wrong : there is no third conclusion possible.”—REV. THEODORE PARKER.

†“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven.”—MATTHEW, vii., 21.

How strange and complex is the human mind !
 To what proud views and weaknesses inclin'd !
 Now like a God on some high mission bent,
 And now in bestial stubbornness content.
 Itself it knows not,* yet pretends to trace
 The hand divine in every form and place :
 Speaks of his will, his nature, power, and laws,
 As if it were the cause of the Great Cause.
 Yet though alike commanding church and state,
 It is but pompous weakness—feebly great.
 We thus presume the eternal laws to scan,
 Ignorant of those that operate on man ;
 And then profess our happiness to seek
 By uttering certain phrases once a week,
 As if by that we cancelled every sin,
 Committed oft the long six days within.
 Why lay a claim to faith we do not feel ? †
 Why practice wrongs which sermons may not heal ?
 Is there no charm—no fair reward in duty ?
 Must virtue paint to win us by her beauty ?
 Then is the church a stumbling-block to youth,
 And all its homilies but libel truth.
 What do its teachings or its prayers avail
 If all our vaunted goodness seem to fail ?

* “ The understanding, like the eye, whilst it makes us see and perceive all other things, takes no notice of itself : it requires art and pains to set it at a distance, and make it its own object.”—LOCKE.

† “ Some impose upon the world that they believe that which they do not ; others, more in number, make themselves believe that they believe, not being able to penetrate into what it is to believe.”—MONTAIGNE.

I seek, but seek in vain a christian life,
While all around is selfishness and strife :
By one law taught to serve and love my brother—
To persecute and hang him by another :
Build churches to instruct in works of love,
And gaols our loving tendencies to prove .
Profess in prayer each other to forgive,
And in the world deny the right to live.
We train our youth to evil while we preach—*
And bid the gaoler better morals teach :
We daily ask for mercy— but extend
None to our poorer brethren who offend.
And does the church her willing arms unfold
When wanders forth the culprit, poor and old ?
Does she for guilt her mercy interpose,
When fellow-sinners turn, alas, to foes ?
Like Him whose name and functions she assumes,
Doth she illume with hope the prison glooms ?
Doth she send forth her messengers of peace
To feed the poor, and bid their sorrows cease ?
To win them to her bosom, and invite
Th' unlettered mass, to share her better light ?
Ah, no ! she sees the selfish aims of life—
Looks on unmoved, or joins the wretched strife ;
To Mammon bends her with obsequious smile,
And lifts her daring head to heaven the while.

* By this remark I would not have it supposed that I intend to charge those who have the care of our youth with systematically teaching evil—I only mean that while we *neglect* to teach, we are in *effect* training to evil.

Born of the law, and wedded to the state,
She only seeks the favours of the great.*

Oh! for a power these whispers to reveal—
These mystic thoughts, which o'er my spirit steal,
Like those perennial forms which move in space,
And fade ere yet the eye their light may trace.
How poor is language to reflect the life,
Or body forth the strange interior strife!
Words cannot symbolise those rainbow hues,
Which o'er objective forms a charm diffuse;
Still less their power those feelings to denote,
Which through the brain in dreamy silence float.
I could a church describe whose power and will
Combined each social duty to fulfil—
To join each class by that terrestrial tie
Which merges all distinctions, low and high;
That makes mankind all brethren, and throws
down
All the factitious barriers that have grown
To sunder man from man, and keep from view
The only way our hearts can bliss pursue.
The inner man has never yet been known—
The soul has still a kingdom of its own;

*I would caution the reader against supposing that I wish to make any reflection upon *individuals*—my aim is larger; I speak of institutions, which, while admitting them to have been, in the hands of providence, a source of negative good, I still maintain are totally inadequate to the wants of an enlightened age. In reference to the members of the church, I say, with Parker:—"No doubt there are good men in all churches, and out of all churches: there have been such in the holds of pirate-ships, and in robbers' dens."

No earthly power nor wisdom can assign
Its functions, limits—human or divine.
That men are happy, few will own who pass
Upon the wings of thought from class to class :
Our life has hard conditions to fulfil ;
Fate trifles rudely with the human will—
Makes bitter sport of every cherished aim,
And laughs to scorn our monuments of fame.
The things on which affection laid its hand,
Though few they be, are wrecked upon the sand
On which our trusting hopes are fondly built—
The dreams alike of Innocence and Guilt.
So true, indeed, this law of life is found,
That care attends where wealth doth most
abound:
Like ghosts of those from whom we've drawn
their share,
Rising to haunt the conscience and to scare.
Thus nature speaks equality to all—
Makes no distinctions, knows nor great nor small.
At her behest imperial Cæsar fell,
And all that dared against her laws rebel :
To each alike those laws she doth proclaim—
Fixed, true, eterne, immutably the same ;
And though, in life, unequal rights obtain,
Nature still rules in death's more lasting reign.
There the caprice of fortune may not reach,
And one maternal pillow welcomes each—
Like the sweet balm of drowsy night's repose,
When the day's business and its follies close :

Then is the crown laid with its cares aside,
And prince and peasant into slumber glide :
Then is the mitred head and branded name,
Their sins forgot, by nature held the same.
Life is a thing of hours—we count and weep ;
But who can solve Death's everlasting sleep ?
Of that great mystery naught can e'er be known,
'Tis ours to wait until our work be done.
One thing is certain, and one duty clear—
We're bound to help each other while we're here ;
Whatever creed or colour we may be,
I have a claim on each, and each on me.
The God that made us never could design
That one should live in ease, while myriads pine
Beneath the yoke of trouble—that some should
toil,

While the rich clergy may look on and smile ;
That titled sin in lazy wealth should thrive,
While honest worth scarce keeps itself alive.
Look o'er the town, where spires and chimneys
rise,

In peaceful contest, to the vaulted skies :
Do all that dwell beneath those pointing forms
Partake alike of sunshine and of storms ?
Ah ! no—too oft, the few that flourish there
Are those, untouched by love, unhurt by care,
Who, pressing onward in the race for gain,
Hear not the plaints around of human pain :
Thus are their longings all confined to pelf,
And social sympathies are merged in self.

We want not churches made with human hands,
(Tied to life's work by perishable bands,)
But one whose heaven-wrought symmetry commands

The trusting love of all—whose floor is earth,
Whose roof the "spacious firmament," lit forth
With the fresh smile of morn—beneath whose ray
The world-worn Ishmaels may speed their way—
Beneath whose generous smile each soul is
brought,

And every child of God is fed and taught :
Then shall the bread of life be freely given,
As on rejoicing trees descend the dews of Heaven.

When wilt thou come, instructress of the mind,*
And let thy reign encircle all mankind ?
When from our eyes the bandage wilt thou tear
Which now, alas ! we even love to wear ?
When wilt thou shed thy universal light—
Expose all wrong, and vindicate the right ?
Show that religion is a heavenly plant,
That grows by love, and not by priestly cant :
That earthly good must mingle in its plan,
And serving God consists in blessing man :
That churches may a creedless mass controul,
But never hold dominion o'er the soul,
Whose fair domain, as truth extends below,
Will, to the last, in spite of parsons, grow.

* Education.

E'en now the press asserts its glorious sway,
And heralds forth a brighter, happier day.
The speed of steam, and that electric fire
Which speaks with instant voice along the wire,
Were vain, if not yet destined to extend
Thy peaceful reign o'er earth from end to end.
Cease, then, all selfish fears and slavish ties,
And in fraternal love bid every nation rise! *

* In a newspaper controversy I held some time ago with the Rev. Brewin Grant, on the subject of national education, I showed that there were nearly 40,000 children in Birmingham alone, left totally unprovided for by the voluntary system, which he advocated. Nevertheless it must be admitted that much good has resulted even from the limited and defective machinery of our present educational system. Those who can recollect (as I do) when almost every day our thoroughfares were blocked up by a savage crowd collected to witness a pugilistic encounter, and every Sunday morning the neighbourhood of Vaughton's Hole was infested by a congregation of ruffians assembled to fight their bulldogs, will allow that a better state of things has come to pass, and that we may with confidence look forward to still brighter days.

PART II.

HARK! how the bells, with merry peal, proclaim
Through night's dull reign another year to fame!
The new half-century,* with a birth sublime,
Bursts from the womb of ever-flowing time,
Whose silent footfalls have trod out our youth,
And bade us leave fair poesy for truth—
To look with fond regret upon the past,
Which mingles with our strain—the proudest, and
the last!

A strain that may embalm its author's name
With other lowly candidates for fame,
Who yet, though long unknown, the envied wreath
may claim.

It is the year when that stupendous pile,
Whose fame already dawns upon our isle,
Will rise before the world, and shed a glory,
Unheard of e'en in ancient song or story,

* This was originally written on the morning of the 1st of January, 1851.

On England's greatness—which its founder* knew,
When in his mind the vast conception grew.
All nations are invited to compete,
And in its crystal walls in peace to meet;
While every town, with emulative zeal,
Will join the friendly race, for England's weal;
And, not the least, the laurels to contest,
Our local industry shall stand confest;
Whose skill, and power, and greatness, there
unfurl'd,
Shall rise with dazzling might before the world.

But let us not—when that glad hour shall come,
And we shall wander through the glorious dome—
Forget the hands that, with such mark'd success,
Framed all the wondrous throng of things to bless
The wants of man refined, and bid his heart
Expand with joy within that maze of art;
For there will be a dark side to the show—
A shade that follows happiness below.
To the deep-thoughted, every gem of skill
Which sparkles there, some purpose to fulfil,
Will speak of anxious and laborious toil,
Of heated shops, and drudgery, and moil,
The world may never know—thus lost in joy,
To see art triumph in each glittering toy,
And vast machine, whose wonder-working power
Rivals the deeds of fabled Jove of yore.

* Prince Albert.

But will they picture to the gaze of pride,
The ceaseless care t' ingenious art allied?
The weary strife—the slavish fret and wear—
Which Mercury bids the sons of genius share;
The battle waged with poverty unknown,
Where still is heard the half-extinguished groan;
These, these, the symptoms of a feverish race,
Will in that gorgeous temple find no place.

When will the people, not content with art,
Display those flowers that blossom in the heart!
And in one glorious exhibition prove
The fruits of peace, the genial works of love?
Ah! then we shall approach the golden age,
Drawn faintly by the hand of prophet sage,
And gladly imaged on the poet's page:
Then will a Christian world, by faith imbued,
As heaven's sweet reflex be for ever viewed;
And men, who now each other's aims oppose,
Shall live in harmony—as the lily grows
And looks more beauteous far beside the rose.
Then shall the town, with all its springs of woe,
Rejoicing, bid the streams of gladness flow;
And every village, unannoyed by fear,
Shall ope once more its heart of hospitable-cheer.*

Hail to thy triumphs, Peace!—more glorious far
Than all the red iniquities of war;

* The painful difference in the habits and dispositions of our country people, compared with what they once were, will be apparent to any one at all accustomed to mix with them. There is now more suspicion, and less of hearty welcome, than in the towns.

Thine heroes now can meet, a goodly band,
And spread the olive-branch through every land :
The ruthless thirst for empire and for blood,
Which placed the warrior with the great and good,
Which deified the chief of bloodiest deed,
“ From Macedonia’s madman to the Swede,”*
No longer reigns : and on thine altars pure
Are offered gifts whose incense shall endure
To glad thy future messengers, and yield
Far richer fruits than the ensanguined field.

But to the town, once more, my muse, return—
Let not thy pride the humbler subject spurn :
See ! o’er the dwelling-tops the dawning light
Comes slowly on—and from his sleep of night
Wakes up th’ unwilling artisan, again
T’ renew his life of drudgery and pain.
And hark ! the sound of little moving feet
Is heard e’en now along the silent street :
Children who wake to slavery each day,
And cheerful glide along their noiseless way ;
The world ne’er knows them, though its work they
And the same round at early dawn pursue ; [do—
Labour is life to them, and soon begin
The day’s quick bustle, and its constant din.

And now the factory girl is seen to hie,
With hurried step, her dextrous hand to ply

* I need hardly say that the personages here alluded to are Alexander the Great—and that royal fool and brainless enthusiast, Charles XII.

Upon her daily craft: she fears 'tis late,
 And looks with anxious eye on toward the gate,
 Which closes early on th' unhappy wight
 Tempted by Morpheus to protract the night
 Of welcome rest—intrusive on the day,
 Whose every hour belongs to those who pay.
 Talk not to me of negro slaves who bleed,
 That tyrant man on luxuries may feed—
 A far worse penalty than whips and chains,
 'Mid all our broad enlightenment obtains:
 What is it? but to wield a deadlier rod,*
 One more abhorrent in the sight of God—
 To make of each who dares to disobey,
Starvation's victim, or of crime the prey.
 That poor and friendless girl would fain employ
 In toil the light of God, and with a sigh
 Rob nature of her rest, to feed the power—
 The growing Moloch of her living hour:
 But if of this, her only hope, denied,
 Whither, ah! whither shall her virtue hide?
 Virtue which oft temptation had defied.†

* No one can more deeply deplore than I do, the existence of slavery in any form; and few have read with more interest the beautiful fiction of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," so powerfully illustrative of the evils of negro slavery. But I will undertake to draw a picture of the evils of our *own* social system, quite as repugnant to humanity (to say nothing of religion) as that of Mrs. Stowe, and without exaggerating one whit more. But the fact is, we are so familiar with the inherent evils of our own system that we have become blind to them; and we can send our sympathies abroad, when our own victims are daily falling around us, but "*die so slowly that none call it murder.*"

† I have heard of many dreadful things enacted, I am sorry to say, by the *masters* towards some of the girls employed in our manufactories,

And now the eager tradesman too is seen
About his door—his windows dressed and clean ;
He hangs the bait to lure the vulgar eye,
And tempt the gazing countryman to buy.
Oh ! how he longs to hear the ringing coin,
And see it dazzling on his counter shine.
Business to him is life—his thoughts divided
'Twixt rent and profits—though left undecided.
Ah ! who shall speak the racking cares of those
Who 'neath appearance hide a thousand woes !
Who play their part with all the studied zeal
Which buskin'd heroes are supposed to feel.
Each on the shrine of commerce casts his all,
Whose cruel frowns the stoutest heart appal.
Like the rich merchant who by hopes upborne
Embarks his stores, and asks a fair return.
Awhile by prosperous gales the vessel steers,
But gathering storms awake his stifled fears ;
From ocean's breast the furious billows leap,
He views his cargo buried in the deep ;
Till, rudely thrown on some unwelcome shore,
Life still is left—but all its charms are o'er.
So on the fitful sea of trade is toss'd
Full many a freight that's destined to be lost ;
And the poor bankrupt left upon the strand
In vain looks round to find a pitying hand.

I am informed, upon pretty good authority, that one large employer dismisses them, without any notice, on the most trivial grounds. He must be a vulgar, tyrannical fellow, and if I find it to be true I shall not scruple, though he be as rich as Croesus, to brand his name as it deserves.

We see his end, but only one can know
The inner fight—the agony of woe,
When every night his books increased his pain,
And honest pride and industry were vain.
These are the martyrs of our daily life,
The struggling heroes of a constant strife—
Who, though without a crown or laurel blessed,
Stand yet the nation's glory, long confessed,
Who, though by force o'erwhelmed, disdain to yield :
Their cause is life—the world their battle field ;
The only heritage they prize or claim,
A fair and honest, though a humble name.
Oh ! let them laud a Cranmer or a Clive,
Whose deeds by History's pen are kept alive—
To me more dear the worth of men unknown,
Who in a hotter conflict still are thrown.
But though some heroes fall, yet others stand,
And forward press with firm and conquering hand.
Those gorgeous shops that animate the street,
(Where the proud nymphs of fashion love to meet),
Had ne'er been seen in gilded pomp array'd,
But for the cheering smiles of prosperous trade.
There doth complacent enterprise retire,
To count his profits and to feed desire :
His visions all are bright, he sees in thought
Those objects near him which he long has sought ;
His carriage now is all but at his door,
And yet he cons his books and sighs for more ;
Sits in the Council, near the civic chair,
And, though an Alderman, he would be Mayor :

Soon to the throne of honour he attains,
For fortune's smiles make up for lack of brains.

In the primeval age, when wandering man
Pitched his rude tent, ere property began ;
No keen desires, nor fond ambitions knew,
His wants, his comforts, and his sorrows few ;
Then, no reverses marked his wild career,
Unroused by hope, and undepressed by fear ;
Upon the wavy grass content to lie,
When night's dull curtain dimmed the moonless
sky ;

Each morn with joy arose at labour's call,
Shared the day's meals, and that to him was all.
The child of nature, to his simple heart,
Unknown, unneeded were the charms of art,
But when, no longer ruled by gentle love,
Each for himself, earth's eager children strove,
Then came the spoiler with his hideous train,
Envy, suspicion, guilt, the love of gain ;
Then did the ancient patriarch retire,
And War enkindled first her quenchless fire :
Kings, Priests, and Lords above the storm arose,
And men, once brethren, soon were ruthless foes.
Peace has returned with luxury and art,
And Commerce now unrolls her boundless chart ;
Science succeeds—and 'neath fair Freedom's wing,
The beauteous flowers of social contact spring :
But till man's selfish aims and heart-aches cease,
The canker-worm will feed upon his peace ;

Ambition's pride will rule his secret breast,
Or avarice mar in age his evening rest.

'Tis now the hour of noon—the slaves of toil
Leave the dull round of labour for awhile ;
And streams of dusky forms appear to meet,
As on they wend in crowds adown each street,
Engrossing lanes and alleys : on ev'ry face
A sense of pleasure with its dirt we trace—
The joy of transient freedom, as they thread
Each to his home, how poor soe'er the shed.
All trades enjoy this interval of peace ;
From forge or factory, 'tis a sweet release.
But soon the frugal, hurried meal is done,
The hour is past—and all once more are gone ;
T' resume life's penal chains, cribb'd and confin'd
In shops whose heated airs oppress the mind.
Far better this, howe'er, than man should seek
In vain to live by toil from week to week ;
See his trade languish, and survive its fall,
With aching heart, to be deprived of all
The elements of peace—the means of life,
A victim of fierce competition's strife.
Oh ! how he envies then the toiling mass,
When at the noontide hour he sees them pass :
What would he give their humble hosts to join,
(No more ambitious of his ease and wine,)
And feel assured that poverty could dine !
Oh, Poverty ! thou dread, thou ruthless foe
To all we prize or cherish here below !

Why wilt thou lay thine iron hand on those
Unfitted to endure thy chastening blows ?
How is it that these varied ills obtain ?
That some are born to labour, some to pain ?
That he whose heart is most attuned to love
Will ever Fortune's hated victim prove ?
And that the narrow soul and grasping hand
Will every favour, every joy command ?

Now comes the question—let us try it well—
Was man created but to buy and sell ?
May he in safe impunity pursue
A course so opposite to all that's true ?
Are all his faculties so perfect made
To be absorbed within a sea of trade ?
Is that warm blood within his heart that flows
To be by Mammon-worship chilled and froze ?
To this shall intellect for aye descend—
This its sole purpose, this its final end ?
What ! shall the noble mind that would aspire
To the most high, exhaust its holy fire
On things so mean—unworthy its desire ?
Ah ! no—a higher destiny shall wait
On human aspiration, soon or late :
Man yet shall see beyond his ledger's bounds,
Nor count his bliss by mere metallic sounds :
Some worthier, holier path will yet be found
Than that of gain, to mark his life's dull round.
'Tis true, he's made for action, and t' employ
His time and talents well—but not to buy

The goods of others, or their honest labour,
Unmindful of the claims which every neighbour
By right of God possesses and must cherish,
Or sink, as doomed by wicked hands to perish.
This is the pestilent, the raging sin,
Which makes mankind to live themselves within ;
To rob each other and to call it *selling*,
Though at the act there is a voice rebelling
They fain would lull—under the plea of law,
Whose cobweb filaments men round them draw
To veil their deeds, and hide the monster Wrong,
The secret fountain that supports the strong.
But soon the mask will fall—in dread alarm
Wealth guilty crouches as th' avenging arm
Of God is bared the wrong'd to defend,
And on their foes his wakening wrath to send.
Ye grovelling bipeds, who, content to creep
Through life, like snails, to hoard your little heap :
Ye “money-grubs,” whom conscience ne'er could
Who value truth but as it bears on *cash* : [bash
Who never knew to stand erect and firm,
With head aloft, superior to the worm :
Not all the pride of purse that ye possess
Will e'er your being or your God so bless
As when the flow'ret opes its petals pale
To breathe its humble incense to the gale ;
And all the webs your puny wit hath wove
Yield to the insect's lowly song of love :
The bee, that emblem of industrious skill,
Teaches a nobler mission to fulfil—

For while he draws from "every opening flower"
The sweets that nourish in his wintry hour,
He wisely revels in his sunny toil,
Nor asks to share *alone* the growing pile.
But man, who owns, forsooth, a nobler birth,
Turns his affections downward to the earth ;
Buries his secret in her faithless breast,
And asks of gold, like Midas, to be blest.
But, ah ! like him, he finds th' auriferous field
No joy, no blessing, no content can yield :
The world itself, despite its selfish rule,
Proclaims at last its minion was a fool.

But let us steal from out this busy hive,
Where men and christians 'gainst each other
strive ;
Leave all the false chicanery of its trade,
Its ceaseless sounds, its glitter and parade—
And, fixed in fancy on some neighbouring hill,
There let the eye, far wandering, take its fill.
How vast, how dense the congregated mass
Of human piles and dwellings, that do pass
Before the vision ! dwarfed by distant view,
And mellowed down by the ærial blue.
Oh ! what a mighty power is lent to man,
Who thus extends the town's increasing span ;
Who, wizard-like, calls up the forms of art,
And bids e'en nature's verdant hand depart.
See yon tall chimneys from the mist ascending—
There Summer's foliage was lately bending

And where the towers from yonder terrace rise,
We lately heard the lark salute the skies;
There were the youthful lovers oft-times seen,
When evening threw her mantle o'er the scene.
But chiefly, through the shadowy vapour wide,
The Town Hall stands conspicuous in its pride :
That noble pile, whose claims none dare contest,
The glory of its city now confest ;
Within whose walls majestic has been heard
The spirit-stirring orator, whose word
Was caught up by the eager ears of men,
And from their hearts responded to again :
There too, does music hold her softer reign,
Whose giant organ lifts aloud its strain
When he, the sorcerer,* o'er each sound presides,
As through the vast concave it sweetly glides ;
And there, in concert with the vocal choir,
Are heard those anthems of celestial fire,
Which thrill the soul, and in the sacred cause
Of Charity its best affections draws.
And there was one† to whom is justly due
Much of our fame for love, and music too,
Whose quiet, plain, and unobtrusive life,
Alike removed from bitterness and strife,
Passed on like some unbroken, tranquil stream,
Whose bosom still reflects each heavenly beam,

Mr. James Stimpson, the able organist.

+ The late Mr. Joseph Moore, the originator of the triennial Musical Festivals in this Town, and founder of some of our most important charitable institutions.

Until the banks of time, with shadows rude,
No more upon its gentle course intrude.

Could our forefathers walk our streets again;
And view the triumphs of Time's modern reign,
No fabled metamorphose bards have sung,
Nor legends which to ancient times belong,
Could more o'erwhelm their senses with surprise,
Or lend such admiration to their eyes.
Where once the bleating cattle were compressed,
New Street has sprung, in livingsplendour dressed;
Art decks the town, as nature cheers the earth,
When at her bidding peep the daisies forth;
In every building of this gorgeous street,
Grace, beauty, fashion, all combine to meet;
Where'er dilapidated forms appear,
The quick and renovating hand is near,
More modern features in their place to rear.
First, with its Gothic angles, richly dight,
The Free School* stands, conspicuous to the sight:
Erewhile, its form did modestly retreat,
But now, more bold, it comes into the street.
'Twas in its classic courts my boyhood strayed,
There conned my Latin, or the truant played:
I loved my reverend tutor's† easy sway,
Save when his anger roused us to obey;

* See Appendix, Note 22.

† The late Rev. Rann Kennedy, an eminent classical scholar, and a poet of no mean pretensions.

Then with a rod of iron he would rule,
The transient despot of th' affrighted school.
But, ah ! touch lightly on his failings few,
And give his merits all the praise their due :
The muse would fain her willing tribute pay,
When one so dear to earth has passed away :
She would record his worth in words of fire,
And wake to saddest strains the plaintive lyre ;
For though, while here, the light of goodness shed
A sacred lustre round his reverend head,
Yet human merit, like all earthly dower,
Fades but too soon, forgotten in an hour ;
And he who sung so well may ask in vain
A tearful offering of the poet's strain.
'Twas his high mission to instruct mankind
From the rich treasures of his fertile mind ;
To teach with dignity those truths divine,
Which in his past career reflected shine.
And not alone the pulpit did he grace—
His worth was owned alike in every place :
Though blessed with age, yet all deplore his doom,
And help to bend the cypress o'er his tomb.

But see ! the Titan power that finds its way,
Through massive walls, o'ercolour'd by Time's
grey,
Rears now its central station near this street,
Where many a "line" in rival power will meet.
How vast the force that, with a flight sublime,
Conquers all space, and triumphs over time !

Subverts the buildings that its course oppose,
And snorts its scornful laughter as it goes.
Their ancient rights the rats may plead in vain,
Nought can impede its wonder-working reign ;
Their doom is fixed, the fiat has gone forth,
And lo ! each dwelling's levelled with the earth.
Like one vast sea of ruins now they lie,
Till once again is heard the engine's cry :
“ Prepare the way ! your iron rails lay down—
I enter now the bowels of the town :
To me alike are walls of brass,
Or adamantine beds of earth ;
Through all in triumph I can pass,
And from their darkness issue forth.

With wings of steam,
And a hollow scream,
I pass, like a dream,
Through rocks which sages
Of other ages
Had fondly thought could never be shaken.

The children hoot,
As I onward shoot,
And again through the valley its echoes I waken.
Ha, ha ! make way, the world is taken.”
As with a magic wand the ground is clear,
Old timber, bricks, and rubbish disappear ;
King Street, Peck Lane, and Colmore Street are
And all their houses in the ruin thrown ; [gone,
The broad area is made the fitting stage
For still more marvels of this railway age,

And further triumphs on the spot will rise,
As man with steam o'er vain obstructions flies.
And here we trace (though little understood)
The latent elements of future good.

There is a building,* raised for our delight,
Chaste in design, and beauteous to the sight,
In whose interior both the ear and eye
Of taste refined can feed in constant joy ;
Where mind and sense are gratified alike,
And the heart moved, as imaged passions
strike

Upon its fibres, or well-feigned joy or woe
Bid it with mirth, or sorrow's tears, o'erflow.
There the heroic virtues of each age
Live once again, and move upon the stage.
There the true drama of Shakspearean mould,
Its glorious spirit, and its words of gold,
Are shared in by the artizan, whose mind
As by a purer nature is refined.
There in his robes great Cæsar walks again,
By the true, noble-minded Brutus slain ;
There with the sweet Cordelia we can weep,
Or with Othello, pierced with anguish deep ;
With Hamlet feel that life is mixed with pain,
Or let old Falstaff and fat laughter reign.
There Garrick blazed, the Roscius of his day,
And Siddons o'er the passions held her sway.

* The Theatre Royal, New Street.

In Juliet there O'Neil has ofttimes shone,
And Kean, in Richard, was "himself alone."
'Twas there Macready made his first *debut*,
And there, alas! he bade his last adieu.
Those suns have set, and now, with less'ning ray,
Glide on the stars that gild our later day.
In vain we watch the frown each hero wears,
Or seek the pathos that should melt to tears :
The tyro seems to weep, but all in vain—
The audience smiles at his pretended pain ;
Or meets the vaunted merriment with frowns,
Yawning responsive to our modern clowns.
Still there are some whose merit yet will raise
Their claim to honour, and the meed of praise—
Who, by admiring crowds that nightly sit
Divided 'twixt the gallery and the pit,
Are welcomed as upon the boards they tread—*
And every word with suited action wed ;
That when his arduous task at last is done,
The actor is recalled to share th' applause so won.

Yon Grecian edifice,† whose features sweet
Lend grace at once and beauty to the street—
Endeared to all, by Art held doubly dear,
Whose sons within its walls she still doth rear.

* I allude here more particularly to Mr. James Bennett, Mr. Atkins, and Miss Edwards.

† The room of the Society of Arts, now used as the School of Design, but, I am glad to learn, about to be again used, more appropriately, as an Exhibition Room.

'Twas there that, roused by emulative zeal,
Our eager artists made their first appeal
To public judgment and to public taste,
And on its walls their rival offerings placed.
'Twas in that room, well formed for the display,
Each painting hung, and had its transient day.
There he* who long has left us to deplore
That one so bright on earth must shine no more—
Whose gentle gifts of manners, mind, and heart,
With all his wondrous pencil could impart,
Aided the infant effort, and with pride
Watched o'er its dawning fame, extended wide.
His pupils joined the friendly strife, and there
Gave first the promise which has bloomed so
fair.

Creswick his "prentice hand" did there essay—
Now raised to share the honours of "R.A."
Henshaw gave first his early promise there,
Whose ample fruit admiring myriads share.
And Hill,† who since a loftier path has gained,
There first aspired to reach the height attained.
But let us leave the past, and onward go
To where we still display in Temple Row :
There local works that boast mimetic skill
Are seen,—if light but reach the place they fill ;
While daubs by some ambitious "member" shine
With matchless impudence upon the "line."

* The late Mr. J. V. Barber.

† Mr. J. J. Hill, formerly a portrait-painter—now very successful in the department of rustic figures.

Still there are those which shed deserved renown
On the artistic talent of the town,
There Hollins, (how that name, to memory dear,
Calls up the dream of music* to the ear!)
Whose sculpture, long by studious art refined,
Bears in its chiselled forms the stamp of mind :
And as the marble lineaments we trace,
Seraphic fire re-animates each face,
Bidding art triumph over death's embrace :
There can we view his works, and there renew
Our pleas'd communion with the favour'd few—
Those master-spirits of our wondrous age,
Whose names will bloom on time's unopened
Like glory writ upon the starry waste [page,
Of night, which clouds have dimmed, but not
effaced.

Cox with his broad and manly pencil charms,
And Heushaw's magic touch the fancy warms.
There do the sunny dreams of Pettitt glow,
Or Such is seen beneath a garb of snow ;
Bott, dashing o'er the canvas for display,
(Who might have been the Titian of his day,)
Or Roden's careful hand is traced in forms
Broad, bright, and flowing, as in beauty's arms
Folded in love ; and Walker's bolder style
Fixes our thoughts in rapture for awhile.

* It may not be out of place here to allude to the repeated inquiries that have been made relative to the fund subscribed for the purpose of raising some testimonial of respect to the memory of the late George Hollins ; and to my own humble but unsuccessful efforts to get his bust placed in companionship with that of Mendelssohn, in the Town Hall.

Temple of arts! may still thy annual show
 Teach the best instincts of the soul to grow:
 May it inspire our youth with cheerful hope,
 (Too oft with giant evils doomed to cope.)
 And ah! when those who now thy interests sway,
 Shall, like autumnal fruitage, drop away,
 Then still to nobler heights thy hopes may soar,
 And art* shall reign, and artists flourish more.

See, where yon structure† lifts its classic head,
 On which the smiles of royalty are shed:
 There may our youth collegiate honours gain,
 And to a proud distinction fondly strain;
 Until, by science nursed, the world shall own
 Our nobler sons, and guide them to renown.
 To him who long has toiled, its claims to raise,
 To him alone is due the well-earned praise
 Of friend and founder:‡ and to that good man§
 Whose benefactions reach beyond life's span,
 Is due its onward course, with glory crown'd,
 Spreading, like truth, its healing light around.

Near where yon ancient wharf|| the walls sur-
 round,
 And the old "Woodman"¶ still alive is found,

* See Appendix, Note 23.

† Queen's College, Paradise Street.

‡ W. Sands Cox, Esq.

§ Dr. Warneford.

|| The old Coal Wharf, Paradise Street.

¶ The "Woodman" Tavern, Easy Row, a very old house of that locality, now kept and lately much improved by Mr. James Onions.

The man of letters lived,* whose noble mind,
Prompted to serve, but not to fear mankind ;
Whose anxious, useful course no tongue could
blame,

Though every sect could execrate his name :
And why ? because, too honest to deceive,
He only bowed to what he could believe ;
Doctrines and creeds he scorned—though few
would then

Dare to withstand the tyranny of men,
T' oppose with dauntless heart, and single hand,
All that the tide of ignorance might command.
Where Broad Street now extends in modern pride
(Its new-born beauties ranged on either side),
Was once the scene for sweet retirement made,
Its trees in vernal loveliness arrayed :
There in his mansion,† far from noises rude,
To mar his blest and genial solitude,
The classic citizen,‡ at evening hour,
Forgot in books the wealth-producing power
Of daily business life, and sought the bliss
Which pure and noble spirits never miss.
The friend of man, his sympathies engaged
Where'er the sordid untaught passions raged,
And home-born charities would still command
The active influence of his heart and hand ;

* John Baskerville. See Appendix, Note 24.

† The old Bingley House, Broad Street.

‡ The late Charles Lloyd, Esq. See Appendix, Note 25.

To him we owe the spirit that fulfill'd
The noble task which others had but will'd,*
To build a refuge where the poor might rest,
When by disease or sore affliction prest ;
To bid the angel Mercy spread her wing,
And rob Misfortune of her keenest sting ;
Awake the slumbering energies of man
In pity's cause, to aid the generous plan.
Then sweet Philanthropy her warmth imparted,
To cheer the poor, the sick, and broken-hearted ;
To heal the wound, and soothe the bed of pain,
And bid rejoicing health return again.
Oh ! may it ever flourish—ever prove
A noble monument of christian love !
For it may Charity her gifts bestow,
And Science all her choicest favours strew :
May Wealth with liberal hand her fruits bequeath,
And snatch, though late, a transitory wreath :
And Music all her glorious spirit lend,
Its hopes, its means, its uses to befriend.†

The varied streets attract my wildered gaze,
Each has its hidden history to amaze ;
Could we unroof those dwellings, and expose
Their unknown wrongs, their agonies and woes,

* The design of the General Hospital originated with Dr. Ash, but was carried to a successful issue by the benevolent exertions of Charles Lloyd, Esq.

† Of course, what I have said of this Institution may, with equal propriety, be said of the Queen's Hospital, which owes so much to the exemplary perseverance of Mr. W. S. Cox, its respected founder.

The dismal tale of want, so long concealed,
Would then speak out, before the world revealed ;
And downcast guilt would then be seen to hide
Amid the trappings of official pride ;
Or, where we thought domestic bliss had rest,
Grief, bitterness, and shame, would stand con-
fest.

How many a struggle should we then behold ;
How many a plan to grasp the tyrant GOLD ;
How many a broken heart and silent tear
Would then, long hidden from the world, appear !
How few would sink upon their beds to rest,
Without some gnawing care within the breast !
Life in its native colours would be seen,
Exposed alike the guilty and the mean.
The blush that seemed of modesty to speak,
No more would mantle on the fair one's cheek ;
Then down the mask of hypocrites would fall,
And strait-laced virtues dwindle very small ;
Then stilted primness, that decried a jest,
Would stand in native wantonness confest ;
And in congenial filthiness be found
The mushroom progeny of wealth around.
“ So morning insects that in dirt begun,
Shine, buzz, and fly-blow in the setting sun.”*

Where yonder eminence† looks proudly down
Upon the growing wonders of the town,

The people once could meet ; ere on its crest,
Those myriad homes and factories were com-
prest.

There with his host, the Hampden of his day,
Attwood* to bloodless victory led the way,
“ Peace, law, and order ” on his banners spread,
And Heaven approving, smiled above his head.
Oh, what a glorious sight ! when far around
The countless streamers waved, and not a
sound

(Save when the speaker some new burst awoke)
From that vast sea of human beings broke.
It was a day for England—her big heart
Did beat upon that spot, and every part
Of her far realm its sympathy had proved,
By pausing as we paused, and moving as we
moved.

Princes and governments did wait the nod
Of him who ruled the mass—the people’s god.
Oh, what are laurels won upon the field
Of civil conquest, blood alone has sealed—
What are the gory wreaths of thousands slain
On Flodden Field, or on Pharsalia’s plain,
Compar’d with his who wields a moral sway,
The more than Cincinnatus of his day ?
Nor did he stand in greatness all alone,
Some kindred spirits mingled with his own,
The best, the noblest, mightiest of the town.

* See Appendix, Note 26.

Scholefield,* whose ,spotless and unblemished
 worth [earth ;
 To memory long endeared, though passed from
 Muntz, with his bold and fearless front, was seen,
 Whose laurels still retain their native green.
 Edmonds,† with fervid eloquence inspir'd,
 And Salt, and Hadley,‡ all that we desir'd,
 With others,§ who in council lent their aid,
 Of equal merit, though inferior grade.

At length St. Stephen's trembled at the sound
 Of discontent, low murmuring, heard around ;
 Reform was granted—even Lords withstood
 No more, as erst, the nation's weal and good ;
 The triumph once achieved, the crowds retire,
 And peace succeeds the tempest's threat'ning ire.
 But where is he who forc'd the people's claim ?
 (Alas, how fleeting is the voice of fame !)
 No longer now he guides the eager throng,
 Hushed is the heartfelt music of his tongue ;
 The aged tribune, once the wise and brave,
 With feeble steps just totters round the grave,
 Soon, soon to sink upon its welcome bed,
 And rest his wearied, undistinguished head :

* The late Joshua Scholefield, Esq., (father of our present respected member), for many years the joint representative of the Borough, first with Mr. Attwood, and then with Mr. Muntz.

† George Edmonds, Esq., the present Clerk of the Peace, and one of our oldest, ablest, and most consistent Reformers.

‡ Mr. Benjamin Hadley, who left this country some years ago, for the antipodes.

§ Among these were Messrs. Boulton, Haines, Giles, Wright, &c.

But, like those heroes who have gone from earth,
And found in death confession of their worth,
His deeds and merits, long forgot by men,
Shall rise upon their hearts and tongues again ;
And while beneath the tomb his ashes sleep,
The old shall linger o'er his worth, and weep :
Then, youthful forms around his dust shall press,
And tardy justice shall his memory bless ;
Then shall his spirit hover o'er the land,
Arouse the strong, and fire the patriot band,
Spread once again upon the wings of fame,
While amaranth leaves entwine around his name ;
Recording History shall his worth enroll,
In burning words, upon her deathless scroll ;
Around his worth the trump of Fame shall wait,
And Truth proclaim that Attwood once was great.
But other worthies, and occasions too,
Have had the honour done them that was due :
My native town, I never loved thee more
Than when I saw thy banners streaming o'er
Hungaria's exil'd chief,* the good, the brave,
Who for his country and for freedom gave
All that men hold dear—'twas not Victory's son,
Crown'd with laurels, perhaps too dearly won,
On whom thy welcome pour'd—thou didst cheer
The crushed, the fallen hero—doubly dear
E'en in defeat, and mightier far than those
Who triumph for awhile as Freedom's foes.

* Kossuth.

Oh! 'twas a beauteous sight, and brought to
mind

Those noble struggles when thy sons combined
'Gainst tyranny and wrong—thou art the same,
Not only in thy habitudes and name,
But in the spirit of thy ancient fame ;
Albeit now we look around in vain,
For other chiefs, thy *prestige* to maintain ;
For where all men are clever, as of late,
'Tis hard to find a hero that is great :
'Tis hard, where all are virtuous and wise,
For one above the common height to rise.
The days of giants and of dwarfs are o'er,
One man is now a type of thousands more,
In vice and virtue, as in good and ill,
Each has the same conditions to fulfil.
One decent level seems the world to bind,
The same in manners, morals, and in mind :
No Cromwell now attracts the patriot's eyes,
No kings nor thieves above the middle size.
But stop, my muse—of reckless haste beware,
Have we not got a Council and a MAYOR ?
A local parliament, where men are found
To rise at once like mushrooms from the ground,
And get to office as the dream of each,
Weening the chair within his easy reach ;
But even Mayors, strange as it seems, are made
To order, like an article of trade :
The man who sits unnoticed and alone,
Unswayed by parties, and to cliques unknown,

Will never rise upon the breath of fame,
Nor leave in councils a remembered name ;
But he that only talks, no matter what,
And leads (however small) a factious knot—
Who substitutes for principle and sense
Some selfish aim or arrogant pretence,
Soon, soon attains the long-wished-for renown,
And lives his day, the hero of the town.
But now the Council, with new members strong,
Boasts, too, its earnest enemies of wrong ;
Amongst whose band in justice must be placed
One who his antecedents has effaced
By deeds which o'er-taxed poverty must prize,
As rates and levies year by year arise :*
The parish bills and wants he seems to know,
And naught escapes the Argus-eyes of J— :
But, still untir'd, his daring soul would aim
To fill each place, and every honour claim ;
And, like some greedy monster of the deep,
From whose approach the little fishes sweep,
Methinks I see him, unabashed, prepare
To grace, as ne'er was graced, the civic chair.†
But let us not to merit be unkind,
Or to the talents of the rich be blind :

* The increasing rates and enormous expenses imposed upon the town of late by the Corporation, are certainly enough to justify much that Mr. Joseph Allday has done and said.

† This once proud distinction is said to be much less coveted than formerly, by the rising Clerks of the town.

There are among those *nobs** of lowly birth—
Men who have risen by intrinsic worth :
Men who, from measuring tapes or selling gin,
Have onward pushed, some added wreath to win :
Who, still aspiring, yet would not disdain
To lend a hand that others too might gain
The height themselves have reached—and who
 would spare
Time, labour, love, on aught that promised fair : †
Unlike the mushrooms that have sprung around,
Who courted wealth to be with fashion found ;
Who shun the poor, as beings far too mean
To be with *them* associated or seen—
And look with proud contempt upon the man
Who is but like themselves when they began.
The butterfly its way that proudly wings
Forgets the day it moved with creeping things :
Giddy, beneath the sunny ray he flies,
Nor stoops to aid his brother worm to rise.
So he who now, by Fortune gaily dressed,
Is courted, honour'd, feasted, and caressed ;

* That newly-baptized *nob*, B. Disraeli, says in one of his novels, "that of all the distinctions in life none perhaps is more important than that which divides mankind into the two great sections of nobs and snobs." But the difficulty is, in a place like Birmingham, to draw the line of demarcation between the *nobby* and the *snobby* : they are all fond of *riding*.

† I allude here to such men in the Council as the late Mr. Alderman Weston, and the present Mr. Alderman Cutler, Mr. Alderman Baldwin, &c., the former of whom might almost have contested the laurel with Whittington himself, having risen to be local chief magistrate, after a career as arduous if not as romantic. The latter are constantly distinguishing themselves in every good work.

Within his carriage propped, with vulgar pride,
Looks with contempt on all who may not ride.
Yet he has trod the dirty paths of guilt,
Mocked virtuous woe, and on its ruins built:
He never yet conceived a generous thought,
Nor in an act of gentle love was caught.*
Methinks I hear these gilded mushrooms say—
These things that live to flutter for a day—
“Look at us *now*, and not as once we were,
Children of rags, the victims of despair,
Whose dwellings, (such their mutilated form,)
Scarce served to shelter from the angry storm;
But now, *hey, presto!* with magician skill,
The scene is changed, and houses rise at will.
Where once lay hid our squalid shapes of woe,
We build this terrace, or that ‘Prospect Row.’
Highgate at first may please us for awhile,
Till Edgbaston, less plebeian, seems to smile.”
So in their borrowed plumes they proudly go,
Deeming all things, but fashion, *very slow*.

Now evening falls her gradual veil around,
And groups once more within the streets abound,
Freed from the bonds of toil—save where, unseen,
The money-seeker, miserably mean,
Denies himself of rest, of sleep, and health—
With crafty hand, to get at last to wealth.

* I am happy to say I only know *one* man who comes up to this description, and I should be very sorry to mention his name—at least, at present. He belongs to the mushroom family.

Now may the poor, in relaxation sweet,
Forget laborious day, and equal meet
Once more in droves upon the crowded street;
For where, except to drink, can they repair,
The needful hour of merriment to share?
Alas! those proud and gilded piles that stand,
Where'er we turn, to tempt on either hand,
Built on the wreck of many an honest name,
In every street an ornament and shame—
Lure the young eye in life's deceptive way,
(Like living tombs that beckon to betray.)
Their best support from man's worst weakness draw,
And prosper with the venal wink of law.*
There does the demon thrive, and there pursue
All that in man is beautiful and true;
The rose of health, the jewel of the soul,
And all that's fair, is poisoned by the bowl.
Content, that once with Innocence could sleep,
There wakes with Guilt, in wretchedness to weep.
There Bacchus bids his dupes the chalice drain,
And all is offered at the shrine profane.
How shall we stay this evil? how o'erthrow
This dire, this wasting, this insatiate foe?
How rescue from his clutch the doom'd throng,
And draw them from the thorny paths of wrong?
But let us look within those painted walls—
The task's repugnant, but 'tis duty calls:
Those haggard faces now with smiles lit up
(The transient offspring of th' exciting cup)

* See Appendix, Note 27.

Will soon again the stamp of sadness wear,
The fit expression of the soul's despair.
To-morrow's sun will call up all their woes,
Like ghosts that hide, but never know repose.
The limbs half-naked of that tiny child,
Borne in its mother's arms, by her defil'd
With the first taste of gin, must share her doom,
To feed the glare of that too splendid room ;
And the poor shivering babe may moan in vain—
Who asks its trouble, or who reck's its pain ?
With cruel fondness, see, she bids it drink,
Though from the maddening bane the child would
shrink ;

Oh, fool, forbear! though thou would'st thus destroy
The dawning beauty of thine infant boy ;
He has a friend, a parent, that would shield
His helpless form, ere yet his fate is seal'd,
And but for thee, had call'd him to fulfil
Some useful course, obedient to his will.
O ! who that has a heart not made of stone,
Can view unmov'd such scenes, or hear the groan
Uttered by innocence of tender years,
Weeping a parent's faults with secret tears ?
Alas ! few know how hard it is to tread
The path unstained, amid such evils bred.
But there are happier pictures truth might paint,
Where youth has fought and conquered without
taint—

Where flowers have bloomed upon unkindred soil,
And the stout heart hath brav'd temptation's smile.

Hard were its struggles as the conflict grew,
And deep the wounds, the bitter wounds it knew ;
But still, upheld by hope, it carved its way,
Unscath'd, undaunted, to a brighter day,
Strove still to compass what its hopes inspir'd,
An honest independence, self-acquired ;
Until it reached those mountain heights at last,
From whence it looked with triumph o'er the
past,
And held its light to cheer the rugged road,
For those still toiling 'neath misfortune's load.

We have no walks, nor parks, the poor to cheer—
Some scarcely see a tree from year to year ;
Save, when the Sabbath bids suspense to toil,
They snatch an hour beneath the summer's smile ;
Then on the sward they snuff the fragrant air,
And lift the soul upon the wings of pray'r.
Who that has trod its walks can e'er forget
Those gardens where our joyous fathers met ?
The Old Vauxhall,* whose stately elms were seen
To throw their ample shadows o'er the green ;
How oft, when time its holidays brought round,
The young and old would seek its verdant ground ;
There lounge upon its quaint, fantastic seats,
Or hide in sport amid its still retreats :
And when the gala called the larger crowd,
The joy was keener, and the noise more loud :

* These gardens are now completely destroyed, without leaving even a trace of their existence.

Tir'd of the town, the belles and beaux would stray,
And seek that loved and much frequented way.
Its reign is o'er, each form, each feature's gone,
Not e'en the tavern left, nor tree, nor stone ;
Soon will the modern terrace mark the spot,
And soon the once-loved gardens be forgot.

Change is the law of nature and of time,
The moving power of every age and clime ;
It gives a charm of interest to the year,
And bids each day its flowers of promise bear.
How sweet the varying seasons as they roll !
Sweet does the morn succeed to night's control !
Where'er in thought my wandering footsteps stray,
Mutation is the law all things obey ;
Too oft, alas ! a mournful phase it wears,
Too oft the change is ushered in with tears.
Orchards and fields which now delight the eye.
And round each suburb so extensive lie,
Will soon by human forms be peopled o'er,
Th' intruding town will bid them bloom no more.
Save where the beauteous Flora* holds her court,
And where the tribes of fashion still resort ;
There, early blushing from the lap of spring,
The myriad plants their rival odours bring :
There when the summer plies her mystic wand,
Nature walks forth with Science hand in hand,

* The Botanical Gardens, which, I am happy to say, are open to the poor every week at a small charge.

Proudly unfolds her leafy garb of green,
While laughing flowers in countless hues are seen :
In variegated pomp they deck the soil,
And zephyrs waft their perfume as they smile.
This lovely Eden opes its verdant arms,
That rich and poor may revel in its charms ;
All ranks and ages seek its cooling shades,
From learned Darwins* down to servant-maids :
And oft the sportive children there are drawn,
To roll adown its undulating lawn,
Or lovers seated on some grassy knoll,
Near to their favourite myrtle idly loll.

And when the yellow harvest has begun,
And Ceres reigns beneath a milder sun—
When autumn all her juicy treasures yields,
And paints with gentle hand the leaves and fields—
Then to the gardens† where abundant lie
The clustering strawberries, the people hie.
Sweet is the spot—retired, in modest form, .
And round its bowers the breezes whisper warm.
But O ! delicious is the feast prepared—
A feast which gods with mortals might have shared.
But where in winter shall the people go,
When the long nights, still engthening, seem to
grow?
When trips and gipsy-parties all are o'er,
And Clent and Sutton Park invite no more :

* Dr. Darwin, author of the "Botanic Garden."

† The Strawberry Gardens, Edgbaston.

Is there no power to draw their minds from sin,
Is there no *moral* substitute for gin ?
Yes, children, yes—for you a better day
Sheds o'er the purple hills its dawning ray :
I see, (O ! glorious sight,) in fancy see,
The sun of knowledge glad the land that's free.
Yes, it must come, my country, Time has woke,
And from 'his heavy trance of centuries broke.
E'en now we view thy morning's early tinge
Edging the cloud opaque with silver fringe :
" Thyself hast hailed, upon thy watch-tower gray,
The rosy foot-prints of the coming day."

When the last evening of the week is come,
And labour's children take their wages* home ;
What numbers crowd around the well-known store !
The factory's closed, and in the streets they pour
To spend the hard-earned pittance, and provide
For wants which must be day by day supplied :
Then, when assembled round the social board,
The meal despatched, the best they could afford—
The floor is scour'd, the chairs are made to shine,
And all is neat and clean, if not o'er fine—
Each tells the chequer'd history of the week,
Ere they retire, the nightly rest to seek :
The evening is prolonged with secret joy,
For well they know the Sabbath's pause is nigh.

* I am very glad to perceive that, through a recent movement, employers are beginning to pay their people earlier in the day.

But, see ! the mother turns her head and weeps
O'er one that, folded on her bosom, sleeps ;
Some vagrant thought, or accidental word,
Has touched with wakening hand affection's chord.
What ails the little one ? she may not tell,
And yet her sighs proclaim she knows too well.
Alas ! disease upon its limbs has prest ;
And now it sinks to Death's unwaking rest.
Grieve not, fond parent ; wouldst thou wish thy
child

Scourged by the world, and by its sins defiled ?
Oh, think that e'en beneath thy favouring eye,
It must have toiled and groaned in poverty :
And, perhaps, withdrawn in manhood's early prime,
It might have walked the guilty paths of crime ;
Then round those limbs the felon chain might
press,

Which now are twin'd within thy fond caress.
Oh, thank thy God that thou thus soon can'st place
Its tender form within the cold embrace
Of the dull grave, secure, and happier far,
Than tossed for aye on life's ungentle war.

There is a spot* where Sorrow loves to tread
In silent commune with the sleeping dead ;
Where, bending pensive o'er th' unconscious
tomb,
Affection's hand may teach the flowers to bloom.

* The Old Cemetery.

There, as we read, in contemplative mood,
The praise-tongued epitaphs on bad and good,
We feel how fair and specious the disguise
E'en death assumes before our dazzled eyes ;
And as we gaze (enamoured of the place)
We sigh to rest within its sweet embrace.
There lies the dust of one,* whose noble soul
Was far above mere Fashion's soft controul ;
Who hungered for the bread that feeds the mind,
And scorn'd the petty customs of mankind.
Yet 'twas his mission (well perform'd) to raise
Fall'n humanity from the misty haze
In which it moves—instructing it to wear
Those godlike attributes, so bright, so fair,
Which clothed his spirit's beauty, and endued
All who his sweet and gentle influence woo'd.
The highest things of earth, air, ocean, sky,
He loved, and followed with a ceaseless joy :
All that the flame of genius had lit,
All that our greatest bards had ever writ
Of truth, of nature, and of things divine,
And of the good and beautiful, that shine
E'en in the hidden mirror of the heart—
These did he come to gather and impart :
As gods that feast upon ambrosial dews,
Through the glad air th'aroma diffuse,
So he from secret springs the nectar drew,
And shar'd the sweets that others might pursue.

* This is in allusion to the late Charles Reece Pemberton. See Appendix, Note 28.

He sought the solitudes of wood and mountain,
And trac'd the tiny streamlet to its fountain ;
Or soared with eagle eye the crowds above—
The sordid crowds that in the city move ;
Or wander'd, thirsting, from the dusty town,
To look upon the sun as it went down
Upon its crimson couch : and he would smile,
And feel his heart rewarded for his toil—
Counting the joys of sense as nothing worth,
While his untiring spirit could go forth
On the broad azure firmament, and sleep
In sympathy on the broad, spanless deep :
Yet was he thrown, like starlight's gentle ray,
Gleaming in vain while vapours underlay
Its silvery path. Still, though his voice was
hush'd,

His uncomplaining spirit was not crush'd :
For he was loved, and when the ills of time
Forc'd him, for health, to seek a sunnier clime,
He'd joy, at evening hour, in thought to roam
With some kind spirits in his distant home.
Her offerings Friendship sent him o'er the
wave,

But, ah ! they were too late ; nought then could
save

His sinking nature from the waiting grave.
Home he returns, and 'mid the tears of friends
His blameless spirit's earthly sojourn ends.
The town now weeps her gentle poet's doom,
And plants the cypress o'er his silent tomb.

There, too, without a name—without a stone—
 Her ashes lie, whose spirit long has flown,
 And left me in my pilgrimage alone :
 Yet not alone, for while she joined the rest
 Of two sweet cherubs of her loving breast,
 Two others claim my heart's affections here,
 And fill the void she left, so sad, so drear.
 But, ah ! not all a father's ceaseless cares,
 His anxious labour, nor his constant prayers,
 Can e'er to them a recompense supply
 For the maternal love, and guardian eye.
 Oh, thou departed shade ! if mortal sighs
 From grief's wet fountain may to heaven arise,
 Still to my oft-spoke sorrows lend an ear, [here.
 And guard these loved ones, though thou art not
 And thou, great God ! whate'er the sum may be
 Of wrath in store, prepared to fall on me,
 Let them, at least, thy fond protection share :
 'Tis all I ask, oh ! hear a father's prayer !

Where yonder woodland solitudes extend,
 And o'er the ancient building seem to bend,
 Once was the hive of famed industrial skill ;*
 Metals were coined, and engines formed at will.
 That is the long-known, well-remembered spot,
 Now consecrated by the name of WATT,†

* The Soho Works, Handsworth, which I believe are now used for brass tube making, and round which I perceive the "woodlands" will not much longer "extend."

† See Appendix, Note 29.

Whose growing greatness, not to place confined,
Spreads like the light, and blesses all mankind :
He who, by science led, those truths revealed
Which in the realms of nature lay concealed—
Whose daring genius age had not subdued,
Causes discovered, and effects pursued—
Who raised a force to aid industrial skill,
And made prosperity a thing of will :
He who unlocked the secrets of that power
Which yields to man new blessings every hour ;
Who, priest-like, o'er the elements sublime
Enthronèd sat, the Prospero of his time—
Bidding the raptures of the poet's dream
Rise, living marvels, from the mists of steam ;
Cheering glad commerce on her venturous way,
Though storms assail and clouds obstruct the day.
On, on the wizard spirit dauntless goes,
The savage desert " blossoms as the rose ;"
Where nature's " rocky ramparts" could extend,
Art's mural piles in countless forms attend ;
While busy cities springing into birth,
People the globe with industry and worth.
Even those pleasant walks and bowery ways,
Where the magician won his later bays,
Yield all their charms to the intruding hand
Which pomp and population now command.
Soon the few lingering beauties of the place
Will come within the widening town's embrace;
No longer elfin shapes will haunt its brakes,
Nor wandering naiads guard its sleeping lakes.

E'en now I hear the throstle's plaintive note
With added touch of sorrow round it float :
'Tis vain ! the city denizens appear,
And on the fading moss their gaudy dwellings
rear.

Aston, thy noble piles of Church and Hall,
Thy tavern, village, and thy old park wall,
Combine to fix within thy snug embrace,
Charms which to me adorn no other place.
Though Clent her massive hills majestic rear,
And Dudley's castellated heights endear ;
Those, with the morning dew sublimely clouded,
These, with the modern wreath of smoke en-
shrouded ;

To thee my heart would still in fondness cling,
To thee my spirit take its silent wing.
How oft in childhood's wonderment I've view'd
Thy temple's rarities, antique and rude ;
Or heard its deep-voiced organ's solemn tones ;
Or read th' inscriptions on the churchyard stones—
Th' ineffectual praise o'er dead men's bones.
Oft I essay'd (but ah ! 'twas all in vain)
T' explore the hall, and view its fair domain :
Within its courts the churl that sat in state
Upon the stranger closed its iron gate.*

* I am sorry thus to speak of a man who inherited the illustrious name of Watt, (and I fear nothing but the name,) but truth obliges me. It is much to be lamented that this beautiful estate could not be made available for the people, after Mr. Alderman Cutler's repeated and laudable efforts.

Where yonder walls, of adamantine strength,
In oblong form extend their gloomy length,
The Borough Gaol is seen—and close at hand,
Two other piles* in kindred terror stand,
The recent honours of a christian land :
There will our children have to hide or rave,
Or find perhaps at last a pauper's grave.
Dost see yon group of happy beings, pressed
Within the carriage bounds, so richly dressed ?
A city merchant that, who lives surrounded
With liberal stores of bliss, and means unbounded .
His children those—how lovely in their joy !
How bright the sparkle of each wondering eye !
In smiles the mother sits—affection's spring,
The hues of hope upon the future fling ;
And as she looks upon each beauteous face,
At fancy's bidding she can fondly trace
The greatness there concealed, and glow with bliss
As she imprints the mother's loving kiss.
But, ah ! the merchant's fated yet to fall,
And in his ruin overwhelm them all :
By one dire stroke of fortune's vengeful arm,
He 's levelled with the dust ; and dread alarm
Seizes the loved ones, as they see him go,
Within those walls to die, and sleep its turf below.
The frantic wife utters her heartfelt grief,
From whose fell agony there's no relief ;

* The Lunatic Ayslum and the New Workhouse are built in the same locality.

Her prostrate mind, now lost to reason's light,
 Wanders 'neath yonder roof in hopeless night.
 The children, ah ! the children—none to guide
 Their hapless youth, of every hope denied :
 Friendless, untutored, they are left, in time
 To find the thorny paths which lead to crime ;
 Then to the gaol they're hurried, for 'twas built
 For those who have to taste misfortune's guilt.*

But see ! where virtue hides her radiant brow,
 And smiles unmoved as sorrows round her grow :
 Whate'er her cares, she lifts an eye of love,
 Still undistracted, to her home above.
 The sickening griefs that misery round her strews,
 Receive a magic from hope's rainbow hues ;
 Like that bright orb which, blessing while it shone,
 Turned all to beauty that it looked upon :
 So there are some to whom a hope is given—
 Plant of celestial growth, which looks towards
 heaven,
 As doth the sun-flower toward his God look bright
 Though earth's horizon may portend a night

* This is no overdrawn picture : I have known instances similar in kind, of parties who have been doomed to punishment by our Recorder, respecting whom I will venture to say that had their circumstances so operated upon the judge, and *vice versa*, they might have changed places—the judge and the prisoner. And when we read of the dark and cruel deeds enacted in the Borough Gaol, since Mr. Maconochie was thrust away for being too kind, it is time for outraged humanity to speak out,

Of storm and sadness: and thus in yonder
dwelling

There is a living faith, though grief is swelling
Each sympathetic breast, as Death his form
Slowly erects, like darkness, from the storm.
Still there's a presence whispering of the morrow,
Whose dawn shall be unmixed with human
sorrow;

And though of grief and pain companions long,
They feel well-armed and for the combat strong,
And 'neath their lowly roof is heard the grateful
song.

'Tis night! pale Cynthia sheds her silver beam,
And nature, e'en in towns, reigns all supreme.
Now let imagination's wakeful flight
Pierce through the realms of silence and of night.
The factory now has ceased its lumbering noise,
And industry in transient slumber lies:
The mazy streets—where ran life's active tide
Throughout the day—are now left still and void,
And with a noiseless emphasis declare
Time's solemn lessons, strongly writ e'en there:
That life is but a strange and mystic dream,*
And death its one pervading, all-absorbing theme.
The town is sleeping—like some giant power
Taking its rest at its accustomed hour:

* "We are such stuff

As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded by a sleep."—SHAKESPEARE,

'Tis now that we can analyze its claims,
And call its fashions by their proper names.
The mighty schemes and topics of the day
Are now suspended all, or passed away :
Or, mingling with the airy dreams of night,
They only wait to disappear with light.
Hushed is the strife of hatred and of fear,
And the last scandal dies upon the ear ;
“ Back-wounding calumny ” no longer stings,
As sleep her soft oblivion o'er us flings ;
All, all is still, save where the wretched hide—
Victims of guilt, misfortune, or of pride ;
Or where obstreperous mirth, in frantic tone,
Utters its joy, in contrast to the moan
Of one who walks the streets, sad, silent, lone :
Ah ! she is left, unpitied and forlorn,
By day and night to bear the world's rude scorn ;
With treacherous smiles she acts her public part,
And then with secret tears she soothes her heart.
The walls of social life for ever frown
Remorseless thus on victims of its own.
Poor God-created, man-degraded thing !
Was it thy crime to love, and this the sting ?
Was it for this thou gav'st thy trusting heart,
When Nature whispered hope ? To thee the smart
That waits on young affection's virgin bliss
Was all unknown—thou ne'er didst dream of
this,
The harsh, the life-long penalty of wo,
Which the fond bosom's doomed to undergo

That looks to man for truth, its own sweet dower,
That fades within the Levite's gripe of power,
Like leaves of innocence from Beauty's flower.
He practised on thy weakness, and betrayed
The tarnished gem his own rude hands had made.
Exil'd from home, proscribed, by all condemned,
And by her love-wrought sorrows overwhelmed,
She shrinks into her chamber, while the day
Throws its broad light upon her guilty way.
Sometimes, unseen, she'd watch the children
play,

And sigh to think she once was pure as they :
Or listen to the caged thrush, whose note
Above the noises of the street would float.
Oh ! 'twas the song that answer'd to her own,
Ere happiness from that loved cot had flown,
Which witnessed those sweet offices of love,
Which still were round her inmost heart inwove.
Then through her tears she sees before her rise,
At memory's call, her early infant joys ;
Feels once again a parent's fond caress,
And hears that tongue which only spoke to bless :
Then come mementoes of her youthful stain—
The broken heart—the wild distracted brain—
And all the picture's turned once more to pain.
Now frowns again an ever-ruthless world,
And 'gainst her peace are curses daily hurled.
Forth from her presence e'en the thoughtful fly,
Starched sisters watch her with an evil eye—
And kindness only lends a passing sigh :

E'en to approach her are the pure afraid,
And every wretch feels licensed to upbraid ;
Her beauty, which she once unconscious wore,
Can charm the eye as it was wont no more ;
The vermeil blush has left her faded cheek—
Her eyes are sunken and her frame is weak :
These to restore each cunning art she tries,
But sickened nature every hope defies ;
Despite her misery, she affects to smile,
Though each attempt but serves to speak her guile :
The untold sorrows in her breast that lie
Drive her to wine.—Oh, could she only die !
Again she drains the cup—again the smart,
The sting of conscience, rankles in her heart :
Is there no angel voice to whisper peace,
Or bid the furies from their havoc cease ?
No hand to guide her erring footsteps back
To tread once more in virtue's better track ?
Must she, while *Christians everywhere forgive*,
Be still despised, as one unfit to live ?
Is there no friendly heart to hear her sigh ?
Must she untended mourn—unpitied die ?
Alas ! she sinks diseased—to dust she's hurl'd—
Unknown, unwept, unpardoned by the world.
By man—not Thee, O God, was she defiled,
And Thou wilt yet avenge thy poor, down-trodden
child.

But now my task is o'er—my humble rhyme
Trembling I throw upon the stream of time,

To float perchance upon its stormy tide,
Or noiseless on its liquid bosom ride.
The brood of thought, long nestling in the mind,
With moving numbers now is interwin'd.
There are its claims to favour and renown,
And there the faint-drawn features of the town.
Such are its past and present, and the view,
But dimly pictured, of its future too.
Such are the worthies that have shed a light
Around our paths—and shall these heralds bright,
Pass like the lunar beams from us among,
Their names unhonour'd, and their works unsung?
Others there are, aspiring to a name,
And institutions* yet unknown to fame.
Why should we marvel, England, at thy pride—
When cities spring like this on every side?
When thy free commerce may the seas command,
And towns invigorate and bless the land?
Why should we envy Transatlantic fame,
Where art and skill are kindred, or the same?
Why, fair Italia, fondly turn to thee?
With all thy glorious charms, thou art not free.
And France, once more encumbered with a throne,
Hath giant evils, yet to us unknown.
Lo! from thy open ports thy children sail:
Australia calls—and on the ocean gale
Hope whispers of her golden treasures there,
And paints the distant future bright and fair.

Fired at the thought, they brave the dangerous
In vain or friends persuade or parents weep; [deep;
In countless hosts they leave thy fading shore,
And still th' unpeopled regions cry for more.
Thou wondrous isle, upon whose brow enthroned
Sits Liberty, with wealth and plenty crowned—
What zone can circumscribe thy dauntless sway,
While peace preserves her olive from decay?
What earthly power can put thy sceptre down,
When factories rise like these to swell the town?
But when I muse, that o'er this wondrous mass
Of social life the hand of time must pass—
That all the fashions of our little day
Will soon, like fancy's frost-work, melt away—
I ask, whence all these struggles and this pain?
Why pant for triumphs of so short a reign?
That spirit which the seer of old could trace,
Uttering its mystic song in every place,
Methinks I hear to these my words reply:
“Mortal! think not these cenotaphs can die.
God rules in cities, and from dawn of time
Has swayed their destinies with thrall sublime.
He called the faithful Patriarch* forth to reign,
From Nile to Euphrates, on Mamre's plain:
And o'er the mighty empires of the east
Ages on ages swept—and never ceas'd
The same paternal rule.—In ancient Rome
He reared, by human hands, the sacred dome.†

* Abraham. † St. Peter's.

He stirs the mind to ponder and devise,
And these its sequent complex wonders rise.
These are the forms in which the minds of men
Long passed away speak to us once again :
And though a swift destruction o'er them ride,
Still will their spirit undisturbed abide :
As he, the captive, chained in dungeon gloom,
Walks forth in soul, despite his living tomb.
Proud on her airy wing exulting goes,
'O'er Libya's deserts, and through Zembla's
 snows,'*

Or to that cottage where the woodbine grows.
So may ye list these cumbrous forms among,
And hear the whisper of prophetic song :
So, in the town, the patient, thoughtful eye
May golden beams beyond its clouds descry.
The poet thus transmutes the sphere of sense,
And gives all form its high significance.
Where yonder vapours in black columns rise,
He views the blue serene of happier skies :
To him each edifice interprets mind,
And tells the living spirit that's behind :
Beneath each roof the lamp of heaven is lit,
And on each social movement PROGRESS writ :
Each unit, to his eye, however lowly,
Is link'd to one great God by chain that's holy ;
And though deformity may clothe the skin,
He sees a spirit beauty there within :

*This is one of the matchless lines of that purest and most classical
of English poets, Gray.

Though poverty awhile its worth may crush,
He sees in secret its forbidden blush :
Though moral poison taint its beauteous spirit,
Still, still a stamp of truth it will inherit
From its Creator—a joy, a power
Which, if matured, would yield the world a flower
Of fragrance and of loveliness—and bloom,
Brightening its twilight pathway to the tomb.
Thus is the town one vast, exhaustless mine,
Unfolding those humanities divine
Which have their seat in sense, and which, ex-
panding,
Shall reign at last, all glorious and commanding.
E'en now the sapphire of yon opening sky
Proclaims the season of earth's glory nigh,
When man shall taste the blessings that will crown
Alike the pride of country and of town.
Then mind immortal o'er the urn of Time
Shall rise effulgent to its height sublime ;
And cities, long the residence of toil,
Shall claim their pristine guerdon in the soil :
All seeming dissonance to this may tend,
And bring that placid reign in which our hopes
shall end !"

APPENDIX

NOTE I.

Lift me in fancy on St. Philip's height.

It is somewhat remarkable that since the publication of the first edition of this work, I have seen (through the kindness of Mr. W. R. Lloyd) a similar production, from the pen of a Birmingham man, named James Bissell, who wrote about fifty years ago, and who appears to have chosen the same elevated site for his "Poetic Survey of Birmingham" as myself. He thus commences:—

"Where yonder cross salutes the azure skies,
See Philip's noble dome majestic rise:
My station there I'll fix, as suiting best—
Then faithful guide you, north, east, south, and west."

To this somewhat amusing poem I shall have frequent occasion to refer in this edition, not only to show the singular coincidence of thought and almost of expression in the two productions, but also for the purpose of illustrating the marked contrast between the Birmingham of 1800 and that of 1850.

NOTE II.

And all our products gild the reign of peace.

Bissell thus apostrophizes war:—

"O, sheath thy faulchion, let rude clamours cease;
O, let us once again enjoy sweet Peace!"

It would really almost warrant the suspicion that I had not only paraphrased, but plagiarised this humble author.

NOTE III.

Buttons, to gem and beautify the dress.

I have mentioned this article first because, if not really the first in point of time,* it certainly has been the most important staple of our local prosperity. I have endeavoured, though without success, to ascertain the precise date to which we might refer the origin of this manufacture in Birmingham.†

In Dugdale's "England and Wales Delineated," I find the following passage, in allusion to the trade of Macclesfield. "To favour the twist button trade, an Act of Parliament was passed, more than a century ago, inflicting a penalty on the wearing of moulds covered with the same stuff as the garment;

* Buckles for shoes appear to have been among the first articles manufactured in Birmingham, and which, except for Court suits, are almost wholly out of fashion. This manufacture at one time gave employment to 5,000 persons; and in fact, it formed the staple trade of the town. At the present time, not half-a-dozen persons are employed in shoe and knee buckle making, and even these are engaged for the greater portion of their time upon other articles. Bissell thus laments the decay of this staple, even in his time, when the principal seat of its existence in Birmingham must have been the Soho Works, then carried on under the firm of Boulton and Smith, though the trade had flourished at Wolverhampton and Walsall:—

"Witness each sparkling plume and radiant zone,
Some years ago that grac'd Britannia's throne;
Then tens of thousands hail'd the jocund day,
But taste and fashion bore the palm away.
When buckles grac'd each shoe—then fancy reign'd,
And honours crown'd the laurels labour gain'd:
O! Birmingham then triumph'd—Commerce smil'd,
And Vulcan's sons from morn till evening toil'd:

• • • • •
O sad reverse—how many rue the day,
Since fickle Fashion wrought a trade's decay—
A fancy trade—from whence the poor deriv'd
A constant bread—and thousands daily thriv'd."

† "At the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, silk buttons were scarcely known, and crystal buttons were worn as ornaments on the caps and hats of the nobility, male and female. Then buttons of silk hair, gold and silver thread, inlaid with jewellery, were invented, and they shortly became most elaborate and ingenious articles of fashion."—MRS. STONE'S "CHRONICLES OF FASHION."

and this having fallen into disuse, was again attempted to be enforced in the year 1778, by the offensive project of hiring informers. The result was unfavourable, as it tended to promote the use of metal and horn buttons, instead of the particular kind which occasioned the attempt to revive the penalty. The trade is still considerable; and the penal act, we believe, has never been repealed."

Macaulay tells us that "Birmingham buttons were just beginning to be *known*" in the reign of James II. (1685), but he does not say that they had not been made for some time previous to that period. He continues:—"Of Birmingham guns nobody had yet heard." So that we may conclude that at any rate the buttons had the precedence of the other important staple, which is said to have come in with William III., as well as brassfoundry. But from the little light that history throws on this subject, we are almost left to conjecture what our forefathers really were. The toy trades are said to have commenced in the time of Charles II. The notion of Hutton, "that the Britons were supplied with their implements of war and husbandry from the black artists of the Birmingham forge long before the landing of Cæsar," is somewhat extravagant, and betrays more of the zeal of the antiquarian than the calm reflection of the philosopher. Woolcombing and tanning appear to have been among the earliest employments of the people of Birmingham; and leather, we are told, formed one of the most extensive articles of trade, even before it was known to possess those other great commercial resources which formed the elements of its subsequent wealth. Digbeth (the principal street of the town) abounded with tanners, and there was a considerable market for the sale of hides, which used to arrive weekly, and the supply of leather was deposited in a Leather Hall, which, with the tan-yats, has now completely disappeared. Mr. Hutton himself considers this market of such antiquity as to have existed 700 years. But it is impossible that Birmingham can have had a market for other and equally

important staples during all this time, and yet have progressed so slowly as it seems to have done up to the beginning of the eighteenth century, when leather, if it did not, like riches, make itself wings, must have made itself *shoes*, for at any rate it departed, and only left the bellows-making as a mark of its long sojourn—to continue to *raise the wind*, which it was no longer able to do itself. This latter trade dates far back in the local history of Birmingham, and for the last two centuries, at least, has formed an important item in its staple manufactures. As early as the year 1650,* it was somewhat extensively carried on by a family of the name of Onions, at that time residing in Edgbaston Street, and who attained to some celebrity through their successful attention to the mysteries of the trade. Mr. John C. Onions, of Bradford Street, whose spacious premises were recently destroyed by fire, is the nearest living representative of the family alluded to. He still prosecutes the handicraft in which his forefathers were employed, and which has rapidly progressed in his hands. He has effected material improvements in all its branches, more particularly in portable forges, for colonial and home consumption. In the manufacture of this article he is largely engaged—so largely indeed, as to have obtained the not unenviable distinction of being the most extensive bellows-maker in the world, and the premises lately erected on the ruins of the old seem on a scale proportioned to the magnitude of the title accorded to their proprietor. The making of NAILS appears to have been one of our earliest hardware trades, and I can fancy Birmingham, a few centuries back, about what Halesowen is now—something between a village and a town, where the clinking of the hammer was heard from morning till night. Ingenuity, however, has come in with

* It may not be uninteresting to remark here, that there is some lead piping still to be seen on the house next to that of Mr. Horton, silversmith, in High Street, marked with the date of 1687—which proves, not only the antiquity of the building, but also the fact that our ancestors knew something of *plumbing*.

knowledge and prosperity, and although this manufacture is still carried on to a limited extent, it is done by the aid of machinery, almost to the entire supersession of hand labour. A large portion of the nails are cut by power from rolled iron, and others are cast or founded from pig metal, and then annealed or made malleable—the hammer-made nails being mostly procured from the country around Birmingham by the merchants. The Messrs. Shaw are among the largest producers of this useful article.*

It appears to have been the practice of the Birmingham manufacturer, for ages, to keep within the warmth of his own forge—the foreign customer regularly making his appearance twice a year; and although the practice is not quite extinguished, a different one is adopted. The merchant now o'ertops the manufacturer in commercial importance: he purchases the produce, and travels the whole world to promote the sale. Genius and the spirit of enterprise appear to increase with population. The late John Taylor was the first, of whom we have any authentic record, to embark largely in the button trade, in which he effected great improvements.+ He had done much in steel buckles for shoes. To him the gilt button owed its introduction and chief prosperity. He died in 1775, at the age of 64, after acquiring a fortune of £200,000.† He

*The original firm was Messrs. Green and Price (Cambridge Street), afterwards Theodore and Philemon Price. The former died at a very advanced age (upwards of 90), within the last twelve months. He was for many years a very active magistrate of this district, and laboured hard with the then High Bailiff (Charles Shaw, Esq.), W. Unett, S. G. Galton, Timothy Smith, Joseph Parkes, and others, to obtain the transfer of the franchise from the rotten borough of East Retford to this town.

+ Before his time the French and Germans made a curious kind of steel button then in vogue. The sweepings of the manufactory of the late Mr. T., where the costly metals were used, receiving the filings and minute particles which fly off during the various operations, are said to have been sold annually to the sweep-washer for £1000.

† Hutton remarks, in allusion to the burning of the house belonging to this man's son, in 1791:—"I could assign no more reason why they

was father of the late James Taylor, Esq. (of the respected firm of Taylor and Lloyds, bankers), whose melancholy end was the cause of such general comment and astonishment. About, or soon after the time of John Taylor, Eggington-Bingley, &c., must have been in existence, and also the old and respectable firm of S. and T. Aston, in St. Paul's Square, the progenitors of the present Mr. John Aston. About this time a Mr. Grice, in St. Paul's, manufactured a button called the hard white and yellow metal button, which had a great run, and by which he is said to have realized a fortune.* He was succeeded by Messrs. Bratt and Cole, who were followed by the late Mr. W. Barwell, of Livery Street, the father of the present extensive metal dealer, and grandfather of the present button makers; and after them succeeded Mr. Daniel Ledsam, Baldwin,† Beck and Thomas, &c., and the premises are still occupied in similar operations, under the firm of Pigott & Co. After Mr. Grice, as nearly as I can trace, the button trade was continued by Mr. Duncombe (who retired for some years before his death to Sutton Coldfield), Mr. Aston (grandfather of the present Mr. W. Aston), Mr. Mark Sanders, and Mr. Deakin

attempted Mr. Taylor's than Mr. Ryland's. No man could cultivate peace and social harmony more. His is the art of doing good by stealth. Offence was never charged against him; but, alas, he was a Dissenter. The sons of plunder and their abettors forgot that the prosperity of Birmingham was owing to a Dissenter, father to the man whose property they were destroying. He not only supplied thousands of that class who were burning his son's house with the means of bread, but taught their directors the roads to invention, industry, commerce, and affluence; roads which no man trod before him." Such was the gratitude of the town to its benefactor.

* This appears to have been a somewhat eccentric character. He retired at an advanced age to Handsworth Hall, now the residence of Mr. Barrows, where he married a young woman, by whom he had two daughters, one of whom is the present Mrs. Thomas Attwood.

† The manufactory now occupied by Mr. Tonks, in Harford Street, was built by Baldwin's, and went under the cognomen of the "*groat manufactory*." It was then considered out of town.

(whose successors still continue the trade, in Bartholomew Row). The late Mr. Boulton, of Soho, appears to have been the next in the order of time to take up the manufacture of this useful article: with him, however, it appears to have been confined to the production of steel buttons. After him comes the long-established and respectable firm of Messrs. Hammond, Turner, and Sons, of Snow Hill, which is continued to the present day. This is one of the oldest and most extensive establishments in the town. I find the following notice of their cases in the great Exhibition of 1851, in the *Liverpool Courier* :—

“CASE No. 1.—In this case are arranged an elegant variety of the highest class buttons produced in the trade. The centre button exhibits a bust of Queen Victoria, executed by Wyon, R.A. (who is a Birmingham man), and arranged round it are the sporting buttons before mentioned, as designed expressly for this Exposition, on which are portrayed the various national sports of Europe; namely, fox-hunting, deer-stalking, boar-hunting, wolf-hunting, hawking, and chamois-hunting. Care has been taken to render these designs perfect in character, and their equal has never been seen on similar articles before. In the squares round are arranged a variety of rich chased, enamelled, &c., buttons for vests, and the large figure of a diamond is composed of numerous descriptions of livery and club buttons, &c.; while at the bottom of the case is a choice selection of fancy gilt buttons suitable for dress coats. These last styles are now to a great extent gone out of fashion, the public having adopted in the place a very plain and sombre class of buttons: but it is hoped that as taste and elegance in costume are likely to be materially promoted by this magnificent Exposition, buttons of an equally picturesque and tasty character to these will be again adopted, in conjunction with other improved features of our present inelegant costume.

“CASE No. 2.—Contains a splendid assortment of bronzed sporting buttons, both in simple and fanciful forms. It may be

well to explain, that it is usual to have each button of a different pattern, to compose a set for a coat; and also that, in consequence, a larger number of expensive dies are required to produce a variety. Messrs. Hammond, Turner, and Sons have always excelled in this particular style of button, in the variety, extent, and beauty of their designs, and those exhibited are but a few of the best of the extensive variety they hold.

“DIVISION 2.—Exhibits a complete variety of pearl buttons. This article demands considerable skill and practice on the part of the artisan, and is now one of great importance in the button trade, employing in Birmingham, where they are almost exclusively manufactured, upwards of two thousand pairs of hands. The mother-of-pearl shell is, as is generally known, obtained by divers from the bottom of the ocean, and is, in fact, the oyster from which the gems usually called pearls are extracted. The best descriptions of mother-of-pearl shell are found in the East Indian and Chinese seas, and are brought to market chiefly at Milla, Singapore, and Batavia. The black shell is a peculiar species, found in the waters of the Pacific, among the Polynesian Islands.” The colour is also produced by reversing the shell.

The rise, progress, and present excellence of the manufacture of buttons, would form an appropriate introduction to the metalliferous art of Birmingham, as it has long formed one of the staple productions of her busy and prolific hive. The fabrication of the gilt button preceded that of the covered, or Florentine, as it is technically called, and required a considerable amount of ingenuity to keep pace with the adaptation of tastes, which the caprices of fashion are ever and anon in the process of generating; but a greater amount of ingenuity was evoked when the covered button came into general use, as the old method of covering bone moulds by the hand, with a needle and thread, was superseded by the use of dies and the screw-press. The latter process not only effected a complete change in the manufacture of covered buttons, but it

materially enlarged its power, both in the variety and the extent of its production. The first patent taken out for making covered buttons by dies and pressure stands in the name of Mr. B. Sanders, who removed from Birmingham to Bromsgrove, in order that he might conceal the process from the prying eye of his manufacturing contemporaries; but as he soldered iron shanks to the back of his covered buttons, it was some time before the public became reconciled to them, from the general dislike to that form of shank. On the expiration of his patent, in 1823, Mr. Sanders cut away the iron shank, and substituted the present flexible or woven shank, for which he attempted to establish a patent;* but the objections against it were so strong that it was refused, as the flexible shank, made of catgut, had been in use fifty years preceding, the manufacturers of gilt buttons having applied it.† The rejection of this patent had the effect of opening the trade to the town of Birmingham, which has since become so important, not only from the number of hands it employs, but also from the almost constant demand which it creates for ingeniously constructed machinery.

The material of which buttons are made is somewhat various, which gives rise to a subdivision of labour resembling other branches of manufacture. There is a well-known gilt button, plain and figured; there are plated, silk, Florentine and other covered buttons; pearl, horn, shell, bone, wood, glass, and porcelain buttons: most of these are made in Bir-

* The late Mr. Aingworth, of Snow Hill, received £300 a year, for fourteen years, from Mr. Sanders, for the use of an improvement in the making of a covered button; Mr. S. has been heard to acknowledge that he realized upwards of £40,000 by this one improvement.

† This was superseded by the flexible shank now in general use on Florentine and silk buttons. A Birmingham man, of the name of Moreton, was the first to introduce Florentine buttons, under the firm of Moreton and Shore, about twenty-eight years ago.

mingham.* Among the most interesting, and we may add the most extensive works in the town, are those of the Messrs. Elliott and Sons, Frederick Street. The varied and rapid processes which this small but indispensable adjunct of our wearing apparel undergoes in its progress towards completion are here seen to advantage; nor are these more calculated to excite our admiration, than the general order and discipline maintained in this establishment. There are several hundreds of persons employed, a large majority consisting of females, of ages ranging from eight to forty years. All these persons are kept to the several divisions of labour allotted to them, each department being separate from the others; and yet, by a law which never seems to deviate in its regularity, each department is made to feed as well as depend on the others. I had the privilege of being shown round by one of the junior partners, who kindly and intelligently explained the seeming magical processes continually going on. The manufactory covers a large space, and the building consists of three floors, each extending round the whole of the premises. The peculiar and distinguishing feature in this establishment is its power of supplying its own wants, independent of extraneous help. It rolls its own metal—conducts it through the varied processes of button-making, and then manufactures the paper, cards, and boxes in which they are sent out into the world. The brass button, which formed at one time almost the sole staple of the town, is now comparatively superseded by the covered or Florentine button, of which millions are produced at this extensive manufactory. Twenty thousand yards of covering material are annually used—and two tons of the thick paper puffing *weekly*, in the making of this article. There are fifteen processes performed by the hand-press;—consisting of cutting, raising, and perforating of the metal, and the placing of the

* For some of the above remarks I am indebted to a little work called "The World in its Workshops," by James Ward, published soon after the Great Exhibition.

paper, coarse canvas, and silken texture, all of which are essential to the making up of the button. The improvement of the jagged or serrated edge of the metal, which is placed under the bit of canvas, and which prevents it being drawn forth by the tailor's needle, has recently (with many other improvements), been patented by this firm. The perfecting of the button, which consists in the fixing of these parts indissolubly together, is accomplished by a steel matrix, into which they are placed to undergo an instantaneous pressure: this operation is final, and the pieces are combined in a perfect button.

But, independently of the Florentine, which is the generic term of a great variety of buttons manufactured at these works, there are also the metal buttons, which are still produced here, the linen button patented by Jefferies,* and improved by the

* The name of Humphrey Jefferies will be so familiar to most Birmingham men, that I need not remind *them* of his extraordinary doings, but even they may not know that he has distinguished himself as much in button making as in every thing else. He has patented and registered a number of buttons, which for taste, elegance, utility, and originality, have not been surpassed. And he has not only invented the buttons, but made the tools himself, for he was a jeweller by trade, and not a button maker. The versatility of his genius is most remarkable, and deserving of special notice. In every thing he attempted (and there were few things that escaped him), by a sort of natural intuition, he not only succeeded, but excelled. It is perhaps to be regretted that (except in one instance) his pursuits have not been of a very elevating character, otherwise he might have graced the lawn as his namesake of execrable memory *disgraced* the ermine. I say this, because, knowing the man well, I am satisfied that his talents and ambition must have made him eminent in any walk fortune had marked out for him. As it is, we must be content that, instead of a Rt. Rev. Father in God, which education might have made him, he is only the best fives player—the best swimmer—and the best skater perhaps in the country; and instead of achieving triumphs in art, science or literature, he has only gained an ephemeral laurel, as the hero of a provincial town, in all the athletic exercises. The aptitude and activity of his mind are sufficiently evidenced by his ingenious discoveries in buttons; but he has given proofs of a relish for what is great in the productions of poetic genius, by a sort of rude appreciation of the Shakspearean drama, some of whose characters he has himself attempted to depict upon our stage. It is something to admire

Messrs. Elliott, brace buttons, shirt buttons, &c., in all their infinite variety. There is also a beautiful article called ball buttons, made chiefly for the American market, in the making of which a £1000 worth of silk has been used in one week; these are produced here in great abundance, as well as buttons for ladies' dresses, which are made to assume 10,000 forms and colours. And lastly, there are the Wellington or bronzed military buttons, of a rich quality, and exquisitely ornamented, crest buttons, &c. So great, indeed, is the variety of this article produced at these works, that the patterns alone of the firm are computed to cost £10,000 a year. There is a sick society connected with this establishment, to which all the work-people are required to belong; and the printed rules for the regulation of the general business account for the excellent order preserved, as well as the moral discipline maintained by each person. Altogether, it is one of the most complete establishments, considering its varied departments, we have ever witnessed.

Buttons with shanks are first cut out into flat blanks, then cut out into form with a die, and the ring is soldered on to them. When a shank button is made it is boiled in water, with chemical mixtures added to it, till it becomes black, and then it is dipped into acid, which returns the brassy colour to the article.

Those buttons known as sporting shell buttons, undergo various processes. The first operation is to cut out the blank; it is then raised by the stroke of a die at the edges, and becomes what is called a shell. The figure, a hound, sportsman, or whatever device is required, is then stamped upon it, and the under parts of the button having been prepared, the two are

Shakspeare, but he has *himself* wooed the Muses, (I will not say that he has yet *won* them)—and has written a few tolerable songs. He finally became an æronaut, and lost himself in the clouds; when he descended to *terra firma* again, he amused himself by inventing buttons, by which he is able at last to sit down contented. May his ardent spirit now rest at last—for, with all his faults, we may not soon "see his like again."

put together and joined by the pressure of a sharp weight of the proper shape falling upon them.

Silvered* buttons, such as those used for police clothing, are made of copper, and silvered on one side only, the inner side of the article retaining its copper colour. Glass† is now largely used for the manufacture of buttons, especially for waistcoats. The process is exceedingly simple: the shanks are put through the glass beads (which, of course, are made at a glass-house, some coming from Bohemia), as the body of the button may be termed, and which are pierced for the purpose. A small machine, guided by a female, is then made to penetrate and expand the projecting wire from its parallel position into an open shank, and this secures the glass and forms the button.

Buttons which have been silvered or gilt require burnishing, and this is done by the friction of a Derbyshire stone, the highly-polished surface of which is rubbed briskly over the button, which is kept in revolution by a lathe, and the proper brilliancy is given to the article.

Mr. John Aston's manufactory is a very large establishment, employing nearly 500 hands. A very beautiful fancy silk button is produced here. These are shaped by machinery into the exact form of the vegetable product they represent, and in a variety of colours. The manner in which the paper is first formed and placed with the metal and silk into the die upon which they are pressed into their respective shapes is highly interesting. Mr. A. has also introduced the making of ladies' dress buttons with wood in the place of metal with great success, being a lighter article. He has a beautiful

* Messrs. Smith, Kemp and Wright, Brearley Street, among the most extensive general button-makers in Birmingham, and J. H. Cutler, Newtown Row, are celebrated for the production of these articles. Mr. Armfield, of Newhall Street, supplies military, naval, and uniform buttons.

† The Messrs. Twigg, in James Street and Powell Street, produce the buttons here alluded to.

machine, of American invention, for turning the wood into the desiderated form. Great numbers of Florentine and linen buttons are also manufactured with great success at this extensive establishment. Most of the above articles are protected by patent. It was gratifying to observe the clean and orderly appearance of the persons employed in this manufactory.

The Messrs. Barwell, of James Street, are celebrated for the production of a peculiar kind of button, called the Maltese button, first made in Malta and Genoa, in gold and silver, by hand, and called Filigree buttons. It is fifty years or more since they were first made in Birmingham. We were not so ingenious as the above-named people, who made them by hand; but Birmingham-like, we soon conceived the idea of doing them in dies, and down to the present day there are old patterns, called the gold pattern. They were formerly put together by hand by gilt-toy men, at about twelve shillings per gross: they are now done by women.

Paper (or papier mâché) buttons were first made by a man of the name of Clay,* in Birmingham, and are now very extensively produced by the Messrs. Twigg, Souter, Mrs. Hewson, &c.

There are also horn and bone buttons, which have a large sale; the former were made about eighty years at Rowley Regis, by a Mr. Mc Millan; then at Halesowen, by a Mr. Harris. About 1826, French patterns were introduced, of a better class and make, which caused the production of the beautiful article brought out by the late Messrs. Wells, Ingram, and Cox, when the dies were turned by engine. But an important and extensive branch of the button manufacture is that belonging to the pearl department. Pearl buttons are made of those shells so largely imported into this country, and the extent of the trade would serve to answer any inquiry

* This Mr. Clay was an eminent manufacturer in Newhall Street. It is said that George IV., when Prince of Wales, visited his manufactory—if *that* was any honour to him. This same man was, I believe, the inventor of locks for canals.

as to where they all got to. The shells, which are exceedingly hard, are simply damped with water before being used, when the workman holds one in his right hand against a cutting instrument fixed in a lathe, which pierces the shell, and thus cuts out the blank for the future button. As the shell is so hard, it requires considerable strength of wrist to keep up the pressure, and there can be little doubt that the arm of the workman is much strengthened thereby, on the principle that muscular exertion improves the muscles. There is not much waste out of each shell, as it is manipulated about so as to use it up to the greatest extent possible. When the blank is cut out it is smoothed in a lathe, and such indentations are turned upon its surface as it may require. The shanks are fastened to these buttons in some cases by putting the wire through the pearl, and turning it on the opposite side, and in others the button is countersunk to half its depth, and the wire shank being inserted in the hole, is so bent that it becomes, as it were, riveted in the hole, so that it would sustain half a hundred weight without breaking. The holes in these buttons are drilled singly by women, who are exceedingly dextrous at their art, and finally the buttons are polished with revolving brushes, when they are ready for use.

About the year 1800, there were only eight manufacturers of pearl buttons in Birmingham, of whom the following were the principal:—Mark Sanders, Jennens' Row, near St. Bartholomew's Chapel; Ketland, St. Paul's Square; Hammond, Turner, and Dickinson, Snow Hill; Wilson and Co., St. Mary's Square; and Hadcocks, Ludgate Hill. Pearl buttons made to about the year 1809, were for coats and vests; the coat buttons mostly ornamented with steel gilt and gold stud. About the year 1809, the flat-top, which was called a bang-up, was made and used for breeches, knees, and leggings. About the same time the first four-hole buttons were made by John Banks, for Hammond, Turner, and Co., and used for the same purpose. About 1811, the small buttons called shirt-buttons

were made, which now form the principal article of the trade, of which the specimens sent to the Great Exhibition by Mr. Edward Banks, of 12, Parade, were considered the most superior. The following letter, which is from the Spanish Commissioner, and one of the Jury of the Great Exhibition of 1851, will suffice as a description of their quality.

“ 34, LEICESTER SQUARE.

“ SIR,

“ In the purpose of making known in Spain the fine buttons you exhibit in the Crystal Palace, the beauty of which is so remarkable, and has never been known in Spain, as in so fine shape and material—I should be much indebted to you, had you the goodness to send me some few specimens, to join with the report of the Exhibition, that I am making to my Government, and it is likely you should soon obtain commands from that land.

“ Agree, Sir, my compts.

“ Yours respectfully,

“ RAMON DELA SAGRA,

“ Spanish Commissioner, and Member
of the Jury.

“ LONDON,

“ 2nd Sept., 1851.”

To this testimonial I add the following notice from the Wolverhampton Herald of July, 1851 :—

“ EDWARD BANKS, Birmingham.

“ Case of Pearl Buttons, Class 22.

“ The general assortment of pearl buttons in this case are of very superior make and quality, more particularly the small or super-button, which are, in make, arrangement, and material, superior to anything of the kind in any other maker's case.”

Of the mother-of-pearl shells, the Panama are the cheapest kind, of which 350 to 500 tons are used annually ; of Bombay and Egyptian, 100 tons ; Black Edge and South Sea shells, from 200 to 300 tons. The Mamella shells are used to a very

small extent, being more suitable to the Sheffield cutlery trade. Singapore shells are the most superior article, of which large and small buttons are made, and is used to the extent of from 100 to 250 tons annually. They average in value £100 per ton.

Before concluding our remarks on pearl buttons, I may say that there is a larger capital engaged in this branch of the button trade than in any other.

Some buttons are gilt. To prepare them for this process they are rubbed over with a brush dipped in mercury, and then thrown into felt hats and shaken up. The gold is amalgamated with the mercury, and every button receives its due coating of the precious metal. After the gold is on the buttons they are subjected to the influence of heat, which causes the mercury to fly off in a vapour, while the gold adheres to the buttons. It is desirable, however, to save the mercury, and for this purpose the vapour which has been evolved from the buttons is made to pass over a vessel of water, which condenses it, and deposits nearly the whole of the mercury in the water. The buttons then require burnishing, and they are ready for sale.

The button trade is more extensive than is imagined. There are upwards of 3,000 persons engaged in the pearl button trade in the town of Birmingham, and perhaps there are 300 masters in the trade; whilst in the manufacture of cloth and metal buttons a larger number of operatives will be required. The various branches of this trade are fluctuating. The number of buttons on a coat vary, and though it may seem of little moment to an individual whether his coat should have eight buttons or six, the difference of fashion, if generally adopted, would be 25 per cent. The amount would be small to each individual, but to the manufacturer it would involve the loss of one-fourth of his trade. And if this be applied to a trade which occupies 5,000 or 6,000 persons in all its branches, the effects would be obvious. We little think that so small a thing as the change either in the fashion or mate-

rial of a button may throw a thousand people out of employment. An argument for the button manufacturers was once given by a dignitary of the church, whose name is yet as the precious ointment poured forth, the late Reverend Bishop Wilson, of Sodor and Man, which came from the heart if not from the head. Being measured for a coat, he desired the tailor to put only a few buttons upon it. "But if every one did so," said the tailor, "the button makers would be thrown out of work." "Say you so, John?" said the Bishop, "then button it all over."

A man of the name of Hill first invented the shank, about 90 years ago. Since then, Ralph Heaton, senior, invented the machine to make button shanks, and Heaton, Son, and Dugard have now twelve machines, each of which produces 100 a minute. In their manufactory forty tons of button shanks have been made annually, and the whole number of shanks annually produced in Birmingham is estimated at 600,000,000.

I have been thus prolix in speaking of the button trade, because I knew the prosperity of Birmingham, as a manufacturing town, may be almost traced by its history, and less will therefore require to be said of other trades.

NOTE IV.

Gilt toys, designed to decorate the fair.

A new era in the gilt toy trade dates from the discovery of the electro process, by which not only additional beauty of appearance is secured to the articles manufactured, but elegance of design, and a more extended field of introduction. The former process of gilding consisted in the application of an amalgam of gold and quicksilver, heated so as to cause the latter to fly off, leaving only the gold upon the surface. This was an extremely dirty, disagreeable, and unsatisfactory process: the articles were obliged to be made comparatively heavy and clumsy, owing to the liability to damage in the process; and the result was, the production of an ornament which

would scarcely be tolerated in the market at the present day. Now, however, the gilt toy maker, or rather the gilt jeweller, for that is his modern title—treads very closely upon the heels of the gold jeweller in the grace and beauty of some of the articles he produces, especially bracelets, shawl-pins, and smaller trinkets. There is no machinery used in this manufacture except the hand press—its prosperity being chiefly traceable to the discoveries of physical science, and the exhaustless novelties of design to which it is susceptible. It is now a respectable branch of Birmingham manufacture. A great many persons of both sexes are employed in it, and it is enjoying an almost unprecedented prosperity. The metal used, which is of a mixed quality, chiefly copper, is extremely pliable, and therefore more capable of the beautiful little forms which it is made to assume. Among the principal followers of this interesting trade are Messrs. Bellamy, and Thornton and Son, St. Paul's Square; and Messrs. B. Harris, and Withers and Son, Great Hampton Street.

NOTE V.

We make the diamond pin, and costly chain
Of gold, or other metal taught to wear
Its likeness.

The term "jewellery" is generally understood to comprise all the various ornaments fabricated from gems, precious stones, and precious metals, either to be worn upon the person or enshrined in caskets; thus brooches, chains, cameos, pins, rings, seals, bracelets, necklaces, tiaras, and even pen-holders and pencil-cases—all, in one sense, are jewellery; but the fact is that the manufacture of these several articles, and a great many more might be added, are separate and distinct trades, though it is not unusual to see several of them combined in one establishment. Birmingham has of late years retrieved the character she once lost in reference to this branch of her

trade, and the greater portion of the jewellery disposed of in this country comes from her workshops. It has been calculated that the consumption of fine gold in Birmingham, for chains alone, amounts to no less than a thousand ounces weekly; and that more of the precious metals are consumed in her manufactures than in any other town in the kingdom, not excepting the metropolis itself. The recently-erected gold and jewellery works of Mr. Goode, late Goode and Boland, in St. Paul's Square, are on a very large scale, and present a splendid appearance. The front of the building, which is in the most modern style, and cemented, forms in fact the chief ornament of the square. But it is the interior that commands our highest admiration, and almost baffles description. It has been completed under the direction of Mr. Goode himself, whose experience of many years in the business has enabled him to arrange the different departments with an eye to convenience, and the utmost economy of space. No expense has been spared in these new erections to secure the comfort of the workpeople—to encourage habits of delicacy and propriety in the occasional association of the sexes—and to adopt ingenious contrivances for the free ventilation of all parts of the edifice with pure air. In addition to all these advantages, Mr. G. has it in contemplation to establish some educational machinery, for the benefit of the juvenile portion of those in his employ. There are three rooms of immense length, which occupy floors over each other, and in which females are ranged on either side, busy at their handicraft. There are about five hundred people (principally females) employed at these works, and such is the amount of gold used in all directions, and flying about in dust from the edges of grinding wheels, that its accumulation in the form of sediment from the washing of the hands (for which there is every convenience) is of great value in the course of the year. Although the staple of the manufacture at this extensive establishment would appear to consist in ornamental neck-chains, watch-guards, &c., in all their

beautiful variety, yet numbers of brilliant articles, combined of gold and gems, are continually in course of formation.

On going over these workshops, in which the various departments of the manufacture are carried on, one cannot help being struck with the quantity of gold which everywhere meets the eye. All hands are at work upon it, in quantities greater or less. It lies in flat sheets upon benches; it is piled in little heaps before the workpeople; and if it is even trampled under foot, it will be gathered in again by sweeping—which, I need not say, is a task of some care and importance. The first operation is the drawing of the gold wire, which is reduced to the required gauge by a process with which we are now tolerably familiar. By the next step in the manufacture, the wire is cut into lengths to form the several links; it is then bent into the form it will occupy in the finished chain; or perhaps it is impressed with some minute device by the action of the die; or it is rendered flat or circular, convex or concave, or modelled into some eccentric or fanciful form. All these several transformations it is made to undergo by means of the universal hand press, fitted with the appropriate punches and minute armatures, and under the control of young females. The links thus formed at the presses are then made over to a different set of operatives, who have a more difficult business to manage: it is their duty to join them together in chains. The girl is seated, with a score of others, in front of a jet of gas, by the side of which is a pile of the links which she has to connect together to form the chain. She is supplied with a small blowpipe, a vessel containing solder, and a kind of long bodkin used to apply the solder to the metal. The half-formed chain upon which she is at work is in her left hand. taking up one of the links, she fits it into its proper position on the chain by forcing the last link which was added at that end between its two closed extremities; then to these extremities she applies, by means of the tool which we have called a bodkin, a very minute and scarcely perceptible portion

of the solder; she now lays the end of the chain upon a little charcoal bed beneath the jet of gas, and by means of the blow-pipe applied to her mouth directs a small stream of blue flame upon the soldered link, until the gold is thoroughly red hot, when the solder melts, and unites the two ends. The red-hot metal of course requires a minute or so to cool; but this occasions no loss of time, as the girl, the instant the solder is melted, withdraws the chain from the fire, and commences operations at the other end; and as two or three minutes are consumed in fastening on each link, she is in no danger of burning her fingers. We are not accustomed to imagine that the making of these chains begins in the middle; such, however, appears to be the fact.

Many of the chains are rich with figured patterns, and extremely beautiful: some have facets ground on the links, and there is a young man seated in front of the revolving wheel, grinding or cutting the facets, not on the edge, but on the side of the wheel, and collecting the dust ground off in a tray beneath. Others are polishing or burnishing the finished work by the aid of revolving disks or by hand labour; and others again are cutting and polishing gems and precious stones by means of wheels revolving horizontally. The motive power for these various purposes, including as well the different branches of manufacture as the construction of the machinery used, which is all made on the premises, is applied by a steam engine of thirty horse power. When any piece of work is finished, it passes under strict examination by a competent judge, and any defects or marks of negligence have to be made good before it is consigned to the market. The work to be done is weighed out to the different operatives, and weighed again when finished; and thus the opportunity and the temptation to dishonesty is avoided.

Mr. John Goode, jun., (brother to the above,) Regent's Place, has also a large and commodious building, lately erected, for the manufacture of gold chains. The processes and divi-

sions of labour are of course the same as those I have just noticed, while the same order and system are everywhere observable, though on a smaller scale.

Mr. Thomas Aston, Regent's Place, gets up a great variety of jewellery of different descriptions, more particularly diamond rings, pins, studs, brooches, bracelets, &c., averaging in value from 25s. to £25 each; while Mr. J. H. Deeley, (also a jeweller,) of Vyse Street, carries on a respectable business in every description of gold and enamelled spring, &c., lockets, vinaigrettes, scent-boxes, miniature lockets, both for the Daguerreotype and painted miniatures, rings, brooches, shirt-studs, &c., for home and foreign markets. Engravers and rose-engine turners are kept on his premises.

Mr. Henry Williams, 71, Vyse Street, has a still larger assortment to offer. He manufactures plain, fancy, and gold enamelled studs, sleeve-links, coat-links, and spring eye-frames of every description; folders, pivots, and single eye-glasses, in gold, silver, and plating; photographic lockets, oval, round, and heart-shaped; double and single gold-plated, enamelled, and all descriptions of spring lockets; stone gold-mounted brooches, cameos, topaz, amethysts, signet rings, keepers, &c., set with stones; emeralds, diamonds, pearls, rubies, turquoise, cornelian, blood, &c.; and breast pins, worked in gold and silver plating; all of which are manufactured for the home as well as the foreign market. There are other jewellers who attend to the production of only one or two articles.

NOTE VI.

Electro-plate, that power of modern birth,
Which clothes inferior metals with new worth.

Birmingham has long been celebrated, though in a less degree than Sheffield, for works in Britannia metal, German silver, alбата, argentine, and other materials imitating, and

in appearance nearly resembling, silver. The latter metal is also extensively used in the local manufacture of pencil-cases, thimbles, and other small articles, as well as in plating spoons, forks, salvers, &c., of copper and white metal. For the latter purpose, 15,000 ounces of silver were used in Birmingham in the year 1846. In the establishments of Messrs. Elkington, and Co., Collis, Hardman, Gough, and some others, silver plate is constantly produced. There are in all more than fifty silver-smiths in the town, and the total quantity of silver annually used in different branches of art and manufacture exceeds 150,000 ounces; one manufacturer having melted 34,000 ounces in trinkets, for his own consumption, in one year.

The establishment of Messrs. Elkington, Mason, and Co. is perhaps the most interesting, as a manufactory, in the Midland Counties, combining as it does many modern scientific inventions of great value and importance, employing about 700 workpeople of skilful acquirements, and possessing one of the most extensive, best arranged, and elegant show rooms in the world. In the brief space at disposal here, it is only just possible to give a cursory glance at the rise and progress of this establishment, which, in addition to its large staff in Birmingham, has two depots in London, where considerable show rooms are also attached. There are few branches of industry which excite feelings of greater interest in the man of science, or the manufacturer, than the rapid advance of the Electro-Plate trade, now little more than ten years established; for scarcely is the period passed when specimens of electro-depositing, such as medals, &c., were shown as curiosities.

Fortunately, however, for science and art, Messrs. Elkington and Mason determined to show that, in the application of this subtle mysterious fluid, lay hidden—but really to be revealed at the call of the enterprising manufacturer—one of the most powerful agencies for the promotion and dissemination of a love of the fine arts, and for the multiplication of the comforts and luxuries of domestic life. It is remarkable that scarcely

ever is any new principle in manufacture introduced but there are numbers of prejudiced or interested persons too ready to prognosticate failure and impossibility of success; in the present instance there was no exemption from the usual fate of discoverers, but a constant warfare of vexatious opposition from manufacturers and shopkeepers was kept up for a length of time. The objections of the trade to use a *hard white metal* in place of copper and soft solder,—the objections, by the shopkeepers, that the silver would peel off, and a variety of other objections too absurd to mention, have all in their time proved fallacious, and all have been successfully removed.

It may be interesting to notice here, that the first successful process of coating metals from a solution of gold was discovered by Messrs. Elkington in 1836, and patented by them, both in England and France. The patent was most severely contested in France, having been tried in a variety of forms before all the courts of law in succession, but finally decided in favour of the patentees. The *Société d'Encouragement* of Arts and Manufactures awarded their gold medal for this invention at an early period of the patent. Messrs. Elkington patented in 1840 the application of alkaline substances for the déposition of gold and silver in connection with an electric current; and without this change in the nature of the solutions, no satisfactory deposit has, we believe, been yet obtained of either gold or silver. About the same time they also patented the same invention in France, and the *Académie des Sciences* awarded the Monthyon prize of 12,000f. jointly between Messrs. Elkington and M. De Ruolz; the latter gentleman having extended the application of the same kind of solutions to other metals, such as platinum, nickel, cobalt, &c. The whole of the electroplated articles manufactured by Messrs. Elkington are produced from a metal which consists of an alloy of nickel, &c., the introduction of which is one of the most important improvements in connection with the manufacture, as the alloy is of greater hardness, while its colour approaches exceedingly close

to that of silver. When castings are required, the metal is employed, as in the case of other metals, in a molten state, and is poured into moulds previously prepared for it; in large or complicated objects they are cast in separate parts, which are afterwards joined by solder. The great improvements which have recently been made in the mode of casting metal enable the manufacturer to produce articles of the most elaborate and ornamental character, as was shown in many of the castings of iron, zinc, &c., in the Great Exhibition. Where surfaces are required to be finished perfectly plain, the process of raising, by stamping the required ornaments upon a sheet of metal previously laminated, is employed. In such cases the pattern or form required is engraved upon hardened steel dies, which are placed under the hammer of a stamp which moves between two perpendicular rods, and, falling with great force upon the sheet of metal placed under it, completes it in the form or design engraved upon the die. Smooth surfaces are also obtained by the usual process of hammering. When the required surface has been obtained, it is polished by means of brushing or grinding by steam power with emery, sand or rotten stone. The various parts, such as handles, borders, and ornamental cast work, &c., required to form the complete article, are united together by hard solder, melted by means of the blowpipe, and when finished by the chaser, they are ready for the reception of the metal to be deposited.

The advantage which, at this period of manufacture, the article possesses over other plated goods in the same stage, consists therefore in the use of white metal formed as above described, and of greater strength and hardness than silver itself, as a base, instead of copper, upon which the pure metal is deposited; the colour of the metal forming the base approximates closely to that of pure silver, and thereby avoids the unsightly appearance presented by the copper showing itself, after a short period of wear, in those plated articles where that metal is used as a base.

We have now taken the reader through the various preliminary processes of manufacture, to the stage when the article destined to receive the coating of pure metal is polished and completed in every respect. The next step is the Electroplating itself. It is an exceedingly interesting sight to witness, in the workshop of the artizan, the galvanic troughs and the magnets sending forth that subtle agent which in former times was known only in its uncontrolled power as it issued from the thunder-cloud; but which, traversing the slender wires, becomes in the hands of the workman a means of accomplishing his purpose as fully and as completely as any other tool or implement which he employs; and causing, at his discretion, a deposit of the gold and silver in the solutions to take place upon the articles required to be coated. Messrs. Elkington and Co. employ a gigantic magnetic electrical machine, worked by a steam engine, a shock from which would annihilate a dozen men. This monster machine consists of a series of sixty-four permanent magnets, arranged in a circle in such a manner that an armature of wrought iron may revolve with great rapidity at a short distance from their poles, the current produced from which is conveyed by means of wires to different parts of the factory, in the same mode as gas in ordinary houses. The solutions of gold and silver are formed by dissolving an oxide, or salt of the metal, in cyanide of potassium; the articles which are required to be coated are attached by the operator to a wire in connection with the positive or zinc plate of the electrical apparatus, and are immersed in the solution. A plate of silver, gold, or other metal required to be deposited is placed in the vessel which contains the solution, and, being connected with the negative or copper plate of the apparatus, is partially dissolved, and transferred to the article by the current of electricity which passes between them. A period varying from five to ten hours is required for a good coating of silver; gold, in consequence of a less proportion being usually needed, being depo-

sited with greater speed. Where it is required that the object should be only partially gilt or coated, the portions not requiring the deposit are covered with a varnish which effectually prevents its adhesion.

When the articles have received their coating of pure metal, deposited without the bright surface, they may be either burnished or polished. The polishing which spoons and forks and small plain articles of that nature undergo, is performed by an instrument formed either of blood-stone or polished steel, of various shapes, as required; the burnishing which all gilt articles receive, is performed by rubbing the surface with a burnisher and soap and water. A large number of females are employed in this department.

The great advantages which the finished article produced by this process possesses are, that the union of the deposited surface with the base is so perfect and complete as to form, in fact, but one body. This is proved in a striking degree by the great pressure which the surface undergoes in the polishing, and by the fact that it will support a red heat without injury. To those who object to electro-plated goods on the ground that the surface is liable to peel off, such tests as these would, we should conceive, prove quite satisfactory. A second great advantage is, that the metal deposited on the more prominent parts of the article, and those which are more exposed to wear, is stronger than on those portions which are less exposed; thus giving to electro-plated goods a decided advantage over those plated by the ordinary mode. The articles exhibited in the show room also prove that the most beautiful plain surfaces, as well as every description of style, however elaborate, and whether embossed or engraved, can be produced with equal facility and success. No visitor to Birmingham or passing stranger should omit visiting this attractive place, which vies with the oldest and most wealthy establishments of its class, in the perfection of its models and designs, and the well-earned excellence of its workmanship, this being clearly made mani-

fest by the truly magnificent display of articles, solely of their own manufacture, exhibited in their beautiful show rooms.

At T. Fearn's Electro-Gilding and Plating Works, 20 and 22, Vittoria Street, the electro-gilding department is perhaps the most complete and extensive in the kingdom. Here, the operations are principally confined to gilding, that being a pet branch of the proprietor, who claims to be the originator of electro-gilding, and to whose skill and perseverance is to be attributed the present state of perfection arrived at in this most interesting and important branch of electro-metallurgy.

The processes of plating upon Britannia metal, iron, steel, lead, tin, and zinc, are also the result of his experiments, which have caused a complete revolution in certain departments of manufacture to which the electro processes were at first considered to be inapplicable.

The art of dead gilding, such as now is applied to time-pieces, was formerly confined principally to the French and Belgians, who have always excelled in this description of workmanship. It was for a long time felt to be a desideratum in electro-gilding, and was at length accomplished by Mr. Fearn, who now effects, with certainty, a dead gilding which may vie with the best specimens the French and Belgians can produce. Even zinc castings are gilt so as to exhibit all that softness and richness so characteristic of the French amalgam gilding.

I will now conduct the reader through the various parts of this establishment. On entering what may be termed the *receiving room*, numbers of trinkets of every possible shape and almost every conceivable article of jewellery attract the eye; this infinite variety, after being carefully counted, are forwarded to the *wiring room*, where a number of females are occupied in suspending the different articles upon wires of suitable lengths, while to each is attached a metallic label numbered for the purpose of identifying each manufacturer's

work. The articles are then carried to the *dipping shed*, where, by means of dilute aquafortis, they are deprived of what is technically called the *scale*, which is metallic oxide covering the surface, and caused by the repeated heatings which they have undergone in the process of manufacture. After *scaling* they are dipped in strong aquafortis, which causes them to assume a beautiful metallic lustre. They are now ready for the operation of gilding, which is conducted in a spacious room, where, on entering, the attention of the visitor is at once attracted to the immense range of enamelled boilers mounted upon cast-iron tables, and extending the whole range of the building. Each particular boiler contains a solution of gold for a separate purpose; one for depositing the alloy of gold and silver; a second for the alloy of gold, silver, and copper; a third for the alloy of gold and copper; a fourth for yellow gilding for toys and buttons; a fifth for dead gilding; a sixth for gilding the inside of cups, sugar-basins, cream-ewers, &c.; and a seventh for *gilding gold*. This last may sound strange to the reader, but it is a fact that a vast amount of gold work is now submitted to the operation of gilding, in order to avoid the trouble of colouring, which is an uncertain process, and frequently attended with fatal consequences to valuable productions in jewellery. Along the wall, near to the solution, a number of copper wires are extended in parallel lines, reminding one of the telegraph wires of a railway, and communicating with an immense Voltaic battery in a shed outside the building. From these parallel wires shorter ones branch out for the use of the operators at each gilding solution. A plate of fine gold is suspended in the yellow gilding solutions, and an alloyed plate in the solutions for gilding red, pale, &c., which are attached to the wire in connexion with the copper or negative plate of the battery. The objects to be gilt, after a second dipping in aquafortis, are connected with the conducting wire of the zinc or positive plate of the battery, and

immersed in the liquid. Thus the circuit of the battery is complete, and the deposit of gold commences instantaneously; at the same time the dissolution of the gold plate is effected, which furnishes a supply of gold to the liquid to compensate for that which is reduced upon the work. The articles are gently agitated in the solution during the operation, until a sufficient coating of gold is obtained; the time, varying from a minute to half an hour, depending of course on the quality of gilding desired. The process of gilding *toy work*, buttons, &c., is very rapid, in consequence of the intense battery power employed. It appears as if it were done by magic: common metal articles which but a few minutes ago presented a rough, dark appearance, as if just taken from the fire, are now clothed with a splendid covering of pure gold, equal in effect to the richest-coloured gold articles. The alloy gilding is accomplished with equal facility: the operator, having perfect control over the solutions, is able by a judicious variation of the battery power to produce any desired effect, varying in one solution from the deep red to the rich orange, and in another from the yellow to the pale green. In gilding the inside of vessels, such as sugar-basins, &c., the operator fills them with the gold solution, and suspends a gold plate in the interior, the article and the gold plate being in connexion with the opposite poles of the battery, the liquid forming the medium between the two extremes: a current of electricity is the result, which is continued until the articles have received the desired thickness of gilding.

The last operation is *scratching*. This is effected by pressing the gilded part of the vessel against fine brass wire brushes, fastened round the circumference of a wooden chuck, which is made to revolve by means of steam power, the brushes being moistened with a continuous supply of beer, producing considerable froth or lather, and thereby preventing the cutting action of the brushes which would otherwise take place. This operation removes the somewhat

dead effect of the gilding, and renders the surface clear and uniform in colour.

The gilding of *steel pens* is a truly interesting process. They are first of all coated with a deposit of copper, and afterwards submitted to the ordinary operation of gilding; this is performed with surprising rapidity, and the effect produced is pleasing in the extreme, the brilliancy of the polished surface of the pen being rather increased than otherwise by the coating of the precious metal.*

The plating operations likewise form a very interesting feature in this establishment.

At the Magneto-plate Works, Northwood Street, carried on by Messrs. Prime and Son, the articles produced are principally spoons, forks, &c., which are plated by the magneto process as follows:—After the casting and rolling of the metal (German silver), they produce what is called a blank. For this purpose the rolled metal is cut into convenient strips: these strips have their ends rolled much thinner than the middle, and in this state are placed singly under a powerful press; this press has a pair of steel tools fitted into it, one having a hole in it the size and shape of the intended blank, the other a projecting part exactly fitting the bowl; the strip of metal is placed between these tools, and the press coming down with great force cuts out the spoon blank from the strip of metal, the end previously thinned forming the part for the spoon bowl; this blank, in a rough state, is then filed all over, to smooth the surface, and put it into shape; it is then stamped between steel dies under a powerful stamp, which strikes a blow equal to many tons weight. The dies have impressions cut into

* In Mr. George Shaw's Work, called "A Manual of Electro-Metallurgy," I find he states, that "Mr. Elkington discovered a class of salts from which gold and silver may be precipitated with much greater success than from any previously known." This I have ascertained to be incorrect: it was Mr. Wright to whom the merit of discovery was attributable, and Mr. Elkington patented it.

them, according to the pattern or design the spoon is intended to be. The spoon receives from eight to ten blows, after which it is again filed, until it assumes its proper proportions. Up to this point it is quite flat: it then goes into the hands of the bowler, who by means of a press, &c., gives the spoon the peculiar hollow shape required. It is then stamped and marked according to the quality it is intended to be, and lastly, it goes into the mill, and is polished and made quite smooth; this latter process is done by lathes worked by steam-power, and which revolve about two thousand times per minute. After it is polished quite smooth and fine, it is examined and passed into the plating apparatus. The plating is effected by suspending the articles between large sheets of silver, in a vat containing a solution of that metal. The articles and plates are each connected with the terminal wires or conductors of a powerful magnetic machine, the electric current from which effects the deposition of the silver from the solution to the articles, and at the same time causes an equivalent of silver to be dissolved from the plates into the solution. The thickness of the coating is regulated by the time the articles are left suspended in the solution. During this process the articles are kept in constant motion by an ingenious apparatus which moves gently in an inclined plane. This motion serves two valuable purposes: in the first place, it causes the deposited silver to be distributed equally over the surface of the articles in the vat; and in the next place, it preserves the surfaces perfectly free from the current marks to which the deposited silver is otherwise subject, and which would be very detrimental to the finished articles. The employment of the magnetic machine in plating was, until lately, peculiar to these works. The machine was invented and patented by the late Mr. Woolrich, and was first introduced and made practicable by the Messrs. Prime, in 1844. This beautiful invention was founded on the discoveries of Professor

Faraday, who demonstrated that if a loop of copper wire was brought over the poles of a steel magnet, an electric current was immediately caused to pass through the wire; and this current was repeated as often as the wire was brought over or taken off the magnet. If instead of being brought over in a single loop, the wire was twisted into a number of loops, the electric current was found to be proportionately strengthened. From this discovery, simple as it appears, has sprung, passing through various stages and improvements, the splendid machines now used for depositing silver, gold, &c. The largest machine contains forty steel magnets of considerable dimensions, each one being 2ft. in length, ranged into four compound magnets; these act upon eight powerful coils of wire, which are rapidly revolved between the poles of the magnets, by steam-power, and when at full speed these coils give off about 22,500 distinct currents of electricity every minute, which, combined, produce a blaze of light that completely dazzles the eye. The ends of each coil are connected with an apparatus called a *break* or *divider*, which is of a peculiar construction, and which has the property of separating the various currents one from the other, in such a manner that all the currents of a similar property are passed in one direction, whilst those of an opposite property are passed in another. Springs are made to bear upon the break, which collect the various currents from it as they are given off, and so pass them by means of the conductors to their proper destination at the depositing vats, where they effect the silvering or gilding, according to the solutions they are passed into. The machines are so constructed as to be under the most perfect control of the operator, who can increase or decrease the power of the current at his will. At the same time the machine works so accurately and regularly that if a given quantity or weight of gold or silver is required to be deposited, the time can be calculated to one minute that it will take to effect the deposit.

After the articles have received their proper coating of silver, the thickness of which varies according to the quality required, they are brushed on wire or "scratch brushes," which are revolved by steam-power, and kept moist by the use of sour beer, which is made to run upon them : these brighten the surface of the plated articles without injuring the surface, and so prepare them to go into the hands of the finishers. The process of finishing spoons, forks, &c., consists in burnishing the surface all over with steel burnishers, which close the minute pores in the surface of the silver ; they are then buffed with leather and a finely-prepared sand, like flour, which is made for the purpose : this gives them a beautiful surface. They are then taken to a lathe, and by means of leather bobs and prepared rouge, are polished to a very high colour ; this colour is heightened by the subsequent friction of the hand, which gives it a polish equal to that of a brilliant mirror.

A spoon or fork that has undergone the various operations thus briefly described, has gone through about forty distinct processes.

Mr. Smith (late Smith and Cox), of Bath Street, has also an establishment for electro-plating and gilding, in which he is very successful. When the articles to be silvered are brought here they are suspended in vats, so as not to touch each other, while the deposition of silver under electric agency is going on. There they remain a certain length of time, according to the thickness of silver required. One great advantage of the process is that articles to be silvered may be engraved, the deposition going on so equally on every part that the finest lines of the engraver are reproduced upon the silvered surface.

At first the general effect after the deposition of the silver was a dead appearance, which has been obviated by Mr. Smith, who has obtained a patent for what is called his "bright deposit," the peculiar quality of which is, to produce a me-

chanical effect by chemical means. This he accomplishes by electric agency.

Silver plate is constantly produced in the establishments of Messrs. Collis, Elkington and Co., Hardman, Gough, and some others. The latter gentleman is also "engaged in the electro-plate manufacture, and employs upwards of seventy skilled artizans—designing and modelling, with much taste and feeling for the properties of his art, most of the objects produced in his establishment."*

Messrs. Wilkinson and Co., in Great Hampton Street, have also a similar establishment.

At Mr. Sturges' Britannia Metal Works, Broad Street, the most remarkable thing connected with the establishment is the production of a hard white metal, patented by Mr. Sturges, which has a beautiful silvery appearance, and appears to answer all the purposes of the precious metal. It is cast in moulds to the forms desiderated, being too hard for any other process, such as stamping or spinning, by which the convex of the tea and coffee pots is obtained in German silver and Britannia metal, and much of their ornamentation perfected. Articles in all these metals are got up here very extensively, and also electro-plated when necessary. Mr. S. has introduced a new process of engraving on the hard metal alluded to, specimens of which are to be seen in his splendid show-rooms.

NOTE VII.

The myriad forms that glass is taught to take.

Glass, as most persons know, is produced from silicious sand, fused in the fire by means of alkali; but were it nothing else than this it would obtain little admiration from mankind, and might be fitly described in the words of Dr. Johnson, as a "shapeless 'commodity,' rugged with excrescences, and clouded with impurities;" but since the

* Digby Wyatt.

hour when the "first fortuitous liquefaction" taught mankind to combine its component materials, countless experiments have led to perfection in the manufacture; and so far as the purity of the product is concerned, nothing now remains to be wished for. The glass in ordinary use is of three kinds, crown glass, plate glass, and flint glass, the base of all being the silicious sand, which is found in great abundance at Alum Bay, in the Isle of Wight, as well as at Aylesbury, in Buckinghamshire, and Lynn, in Norfolk. The materials for flint glass are three parts of sand, two of oxide of lead, and one of alkali, with some admixture of manganese and arsenic. The components of crown and plate glass differ somewhat from these, and variously in different manufactories. The quality of the glass is dependent on the proportions of the above elements, on the temperature to which they are exposed, and the taste and judgment brought to bear in combining them in the furnace. I am not aware that there is any other reason for the location of so many eminent glass works in Birmingham, than is to be found in the fact of our close proximity to the coal districts, which enables us to realise an advantage in the purchase and transit of that fuel, which no other town could command, some establishments using as much as thirty tons per week. The Glass Works of Messrs. Bacchus, in Dartmouth Street, are among the most complete that I know of. There are a number of men constantly employed in this establishment from Monday till Friday in each week, the latter being the time at which it is thought expedient to re-feed the immense furnaces with the chemical preparation, which requires the lapse of the above interval, in order to be molten to the necessary consistency. This preparation is composed of a peculiar kind of flint sand found (as we have before observed) in the Isle of Wight, and red lead. The fires are burning night and day throughout the week, and on Monday the men are able to re-commence their operations. The first act is

to dip the end of a long iron tube into the pot in the furnace, and, twisting it round two or three times, collect a small portion of the fiery substance on the end. The operator then withdraws the tube, and swings it a few times to lengthen the red-hot mass; he then rolls it on a flat slab and blows into it to make it hollow; these operations he repeats more than once if necessary, until he has got it to his mind; he then seats himself on a stool, and begins to form the heated mass into the desired shape, which we will suppose is a decanter. He commences rolling the tube backward and forward, horizontally, upon the arm of his seat, a level bar of iron. He has a boy in attendance, who at his bidding blows through the tube again, and increases the capacity of the vessel, keeping the rod continually revolving with his left hand, which preserves the rotundity of the vessel. By the aid of a small iron tool he flattens with his right hand the bottom of the bottle, occasionally heating it in the fire until it is perfectly formed. If the object desired requires handles or feet, they are formed from separate pieces of glass attached to them while they are hot, and immediately modelled into shape by the operator. As soon as they are formed, they are put into an annealing oven, where they are first exposed to a high temperature, and then allowed to cool by degrees. Without this process they would be too brittle for use, or if they needed cutting would perish under the operation.

The Messrs. Bacchus have also moulds for the making of some articles, such as ink-pots, &c., into which the fiery liquid is deposited, and by a very rapid and ingenious process, comes out a veritable ink-pot. This firm have attained great eminence for their beautiful green and yellow cut glass, in which they are considered unrivalled. A very praiseworthy effort has been for some time in operation to establish a school for the benefit of the people (particularly the juvenile portion) employed at these works.

The Islington Glass Works, Broad Street, carried on by Messrs. R. Harris and Son, are very large and extensive, and a great variety of articles in glass are produced there, particularly wine glasses, which are beautifully finished. The brilliant show-rooms of this firm exhibit some magnificent specimens of coloured glass, especially the ruby and purple objects, which, for gracefulness of form and beauty of style, may contest the laurel with any other establishment. The processes by which these are manufactured are of course similar to those already described (varied somewhat to obtain the colour) as appertaining to the trade. The fame of Messrs. Harris for the production of some articles of costly finish and elaboration is rapidly increasing. They employ a great number of hands, and more French artists than any other house in the town. The order and discipline maintained in the various departments of the works is an admirable feature, reflecting as it does credit upon the proprietors of the establishment.

I had prepared a long notice of Messrs. Osler's works, whose magnificent crystal fountain was so conspicuous in the transept of the Great Exhibition; but for reasons of their own they have requested me to suppress it, promising, at the same time, their patronage of the book.

NOTE VIII.

Then with its claims the papier-mâché comes.

Among the many inventions of modern times for diffusing the luxuries, and even the conveniences of life, there are few which have greater claims to our admiration than papier-mâché; whether it meets the eye in the shape of furniture, or in articles of general domestic utility, its beauty and agreeableness are equally striking and effective. Nor is it less so when applied to ornamental purposes. The nature of the material admits of almost infinite application, from

its durability, its lightness, and its comparative economy. * Admitting a polish equal to that of glass, and receiving colours nearly as bright as those transferred upon the canvas, it alike presents an attractive surface to the industrial skill of the humble artizan, and to the entrancing genius of the intellectual compeer. The fact of this branch of manufacture being among those most nearly allied to the fine arts, and *the* one in which the English excel all foreign competitors, (even the French*), is sufficient to claim for it a consideration which will warrant a somewhat lengthened notice of its history and its characteristics. It is wrong to suppose, because the name *papier-mâché* is French, that therefore it originated in France; when it is well known that Mr. Clay, of Birmingham, a pupil of Baskerville, was the inventor and patentee of the best kind of *papier-mâché*, about a century ago, which in the first instance was only applied to the making of tea-trays, and the smaller class of goods. About thirty years ago its use began to be general in France, Germany, and Great Britain. But its more general application is the result of experiments within the last ten or twelve years; and Messrs. Jennens and Bettridge, of Constitution Hill, are the original producers of almost every article beyond the mere tray, &c. They patented the *mother-o'-pearl inlaying*, which has opened such an immense field to the trade, and by which such brilliant effects have been obtained, as well as one for the imitation of *inlaid gems*. Mr. Brindley is understood to have originated the more common quality of *papier-mâché*, and procured a patent, which, however, was contested by others, and became ultimately common property, as it still remains.

There is considerable disadvantage to the manufacturer of the superior articles, from the fact that there are govern-

* This was mentioned by Mr. Digby Wyatt, in his report on the last French Exposition.

ment duties laid upon the best (or sheet) paper, which acts as a premium in favour of the inferior or pulp goods. Notwithstanding this disadvantage, Messrs. Jennens and Bettridge have never been tempted to produce other than a superior class of goods.

"Papier-mâché" of the best quality is produced by attaching together, by means of a paste composed of flour and glue, a given number of sheets of spongy grey paper, pasting the same on a mould of iron, brass, or other metal. The mould, which is covered, is exposed for twelve hours to a heat of at least 100 degrees, to dry it; it is then roughed with coarse files. The attachment of the several coatings and the dryings are repeated until the necessary thickness is arrived at; the articles, or portion thereof, are then immersed in linseed oil and tar spirits, which renders them unaffected by damp. They are then dried in a temperature of not less than 200 or more than 260 degrees; after which the tray, box, or portion of the article intended to be made, is planed, rasped, or turned to the proper shape, by workmen, who also, where necessary, fit in the internal divisions; then follow repeated coatings of lamp-black and tar varnish, and stovings for twelve hours, at the temperature already stated. The inequalities on the surface are removed by rubbing with pumice-stone and water, and the artist commences his labours. Finally the article is coated over with transparent copal varnish, exposed to a temperature of from 100 to 160 degrees, and a final polish is given by friction with rotten-stone and water and the human hand. The exquisite surface which characterises the articles of Messrs. Jennens and Bettridge is a distinguishing feature of this fabric. The inlaying of pearl in papier-mâché is a simple process, and does not consist, as some might suppose, and as the name indicates, in cutting out the material and inserting the substance inlaid,—it is held simply by adhesion, and its application may be thus described: the pearl shell, cut into such

pieces or forms as may be desirable, is laid upon the article to be ornamented, a little copal or other varnish having been previously applied—the pieces of pearl at once adhere to it; thereafter, repeated coats of tar varnish fill up the interstices, and eventually cover the pearl; the extra varnish is removed, a uniform surface is produced, and the pearl exposed by rubbing with pumice-stone, polishing with rotten stone, and finally handing.

In the polished state, the articles are placed in the hands of the artists, ornamentists, and gilders, by whom they are painted and ornamented in the various styles so universally appreciated; after which they pass through the securing process, which is effected by copal varnishes, dried in stoves heated to about 180 degrees, when the final polishing by the hand produces that unrivalled brilliancy of surface for which this manufacture is so remarkable.

The productions of Messrs. Jennens and Bettridge in papier-mâché have done much towards familiarising the public with the beauties of art in union with manufactures. Their show-room is one of the most superb in the country, and I have seen an almost interminable list of the most distinguished names that rank, fashion, or talent can boast, who have honoured the establishment with a visit. Among the most illustrious we may mention those of Her Majesty (when Princess Royal), H.R.H. Prince Albert, the Duchess of Kent, the Duke of Bordeaux, the Duke de Nemours, Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, the late Louis Philippe, Ibrahim Pacha, &c.

The manufacture of papier-mâché goods has made rapid strides during the last twenty years. When it first arose in Birmingham, it was confined to the production of tea-trays, waiters, and similar articles, demanding little expense or ingenuity in their construction. The excellence and durability, however, of these trifling objects proved the value of the material, and doubtless afforded a stimulus to the vast

improvements which have since taken place. Among the most important of these may be reckoned the ornamental panels for purposes of decoration, which have latterly risen so much in demand, and with which the cabins of many of the largest steamers have been fitted up.

Messrs. M'Callum and Hodson, Lower Brearley Street, have acquired eminence in the CABINET department of papier-mâché, which they made peculiarly their own. The following is Mr. Ward's notice of their productions in the Great Exhibition:—"A cabinet, in style partly Elizabethan and partly Italian, of rare beauty, both in character and ornamentation, is exhibited in the group of M'Callum and Hodson, who may be classed among the highest in the useful category of this branch of manufacturing art. The front panels of the cabinet contain well-executed portraits of the Queen and Prince Albert, and on the sides are portraits of the royal children, disposed in groups. It is also remarkable for its exquisite finish, and for its brilliant, yet withal chaste style of ornamentation. It is rich, not gaudy, and the distinction is nicely and delicately preserved. The facilities afforded by the material and the adaptability of pearl almost tempts to over-elaboration, but in this instance that fault has evidently been avoided. A large table, inlaid with flowers, in pearl, is also judiciously treated as regards the over-attractive qualities of the material just mentioned, and forms a striking object in the Exhibition. A bracket-glass, with lights, is an elegant appendage for the boudoir; and a tray, called 'new,' fully deserves its designation. The music-stands, fire-screens, work-tables, and flower-stands, are a series of objects which not only gratify, but absolutely inspire, good taste, whenever they chance to meet the eye, and, to a certain degree, are instrumental in promoting the elegant enjoyments of life. The same observation may be extended to the writing-desks, the dressing-cases, and other minor objects, of almost hourly necessity, which are so anticipative of the

multitude of little wants more or less constantly assailing us in our social relations, that they cannot fail to be appreciated. The finish of the work, also, appears in the best manner, and not run up for mere sale, in a showy and taking style, as too many articles of this class of manufacture are apt to be. It is evident, from their contribution to the Exhibition, that these manufacturers aim at diffusing their productions among the well-to-do many of this world, and not manipulate them exclusively for the refined and fastidious few, excellent in their way, but necessarily limited in their number."

"Birmingham, which has long been so justly celebrated for the infinite variety, exquisite finish, and unrivalled excellence of her japanned manufactures, is now likely to become more distinguished than ever, and to completely outstrip her continental rivals in this department of industry. By a recently patented invention of Mr. Thomas Lane, of this town, glass can be so combined with papier-mâché in the manufacture of ornamental furniture as to preserve, in undiminished brilliancy and freshness, the pearl enamelling and colours for an unlimited period, at the same time presenting an appearance of smoothness and transparency of surface which mere varnishes never can produce, and which must endure as long as the papier-mâché foundation itself."* Mr. Lane has been honoured with the patronage of Royalty in the introduction of his beautiful invention.

It may not be generally known that there are china works of considerable extent at Balsall Heath, belonging to Messrs. Charles Bullivant and Co., at which are manufactured china door-knobs, finger-plates, letter-weights, &c. These gentlemen are also the sole inventors and manufacturers of the patent Dresden spoon, which is far superior to all kinds of metal. The bowl being made of china, it is perfectly free from any

* Morning Post.

poisonous effect. It is easily cleaned, exceedingly pleasant to the mouth, and having a silver handle attached is not liable to break, as the original china handles. At the same time it is elegant in appearance. The same firm have a warehouse in Ludgate Hill, corner of Lionel Street.

There is a very spirited and enterprising firm, lately commenced in the manufacture of papier-mâché, bearing the well-known names of Allen and Moore, Great Hampton Row. A few years ago, they occupied premises in Snow Hill, as medalists only; but they were soon able, by the talent at their command, to assume the most prominent position in this department of industry. They have since embarked largely in the manufacture of some of our staple products: prosperity has rewarded their perseverance, and they now employ a great number of hands, and have an establishment as complete and as extensive as almost any other in this locality. Their collection of dies for the production of medals is greater than that of any other firm. Miss Martineau, who has visited the establishment, thus speaks of them:—"It was not a little surprising to see, in other manufactories, ranges of shelves, or pigeon-holes, covering whole sides of rooms, filled with dies, worth from ten shillings to twenty-four shillings each. It was rather sad, too, to be told that a large proportion of these might never again be of any use—the fashion of a few weeks, or even days, having passed away. Much more surprising is the sight of the dies arranged along the shelves of the makers of this curious article. Messrs. Allen and Moore have made three thousand dies within the last three years: and upon each one what thought has been spent—what ingenuity—what knowledge—what taste—what skill of eye and hand! A single die will occupy one man a month, with all his faculties in exercise; while another with more natural aptitude, or courage, or experience, will do the same thing in two or three days. To think of one thousand in a year, produced with this effort and ability, and then to remember that

button dies are among the highest productions of the art, cannot but elevate our respect for buttons very remarkably."* Buttons, and a variety of fancy articles in metal, are manufactured on an equally extensive scale. They have recently added to the area of their premises a considerable range of very superior shopping, which is appropriated to the manufacture of trays and other articles in papier-mâché. They have a very beautiful steam engine, of six-horse power, by which the tubing used for their patent match-boxes, candle-lamps, &c., is made. They also get up a great variety of plain and ornamental ink-stands, thermometers, taper-stands, cigar and tobacco boxes, &c.

NOTE IX.

Useful and ornamental forms in brass.

There are few of our manufactures prettier to the eye of a visitor, than brass-founding. The name does not promise much, and the greater therefore is the pleasure. There is so much variety in it, that little notion can be given in the small space I have allotted to myself.

The mixing of the metals tells itself for the most part. The mould for the ingots stands at our feet, in a shed, where the copper is melted in the furnace, in pots of Stourbridge clay. As there is no night-work here, no keeping up the heat continuously, as is done in glass-houses, these pots do not last as their larger and more important brethren do. They are creatures of a day; to-morrow but a heap of sherds, to help to make a new generation. The spelter does not need to be melted in pots; it melts like sugar in tea, by being merely stirred in the hot liquid; this is because a lower degree of heat will melt zinc than is required by copper. Here comes the flaming hot jar of copper, carried by a man well armed with the necessary tongs; another man stands ready with the piece of spelter; he puts it in, stirs it round to mix thoroughly, and is not, as one is surprised to see, suffocated on the spot by the fumes.

* "Household Words."

There is the beautiful flame! and we have more of it flickering and sparkling as the mixture flows red hot into the moulds, whence it will come out as ingots. Those light grey flakes in the air are the sublimated zinc; after a whirl or two towards the rafters, out they go at window and door! We ask, what are the proportions of the two metals? and we find that the mixture is varied according to its destination. The particular ingots at our feet are two parts of copper to one of zinc, because the brass is intended for common articles. If for finer purposes, there would be more copper. For hinges, drawer-handles, brass nails, and, we suppose, warming pans and kitchen candlesticks, this mixture of two to one is the right thing. We must remember the brass we see made here is only for castings. For ornamental works this process begins in a very different place from a raftered shed, among furnaces and clay pots. It may be in a country church-yard, under an ivied porch; or in the church itself; or under a tree in a park, where deer are browsing within sight; or on a mossy and fern-clad wall; or lying on the grass; or even in bed; or in the British Museum; or in a great study, where the light is taken great care of. The design is the first step; and the designer may have derived ideas from altar railings; or from great men's tombs; or from beasts, birds, and flowers; or from antique sculpture; or from his own memory and imagination. Young artists seek money, and give a chance to their ambition, by offering to eminent brass-founders, such as Messrs. Simcox, Pemberton, & Co., Livery Street, designs for chandeliers, and other articles of ornamental furniture; and for railings,* gates, &c. Specific pieces of work, such as monumental railings, statuettes, and brass plates for particular purposes, are done from designs forwarded with the order.

Next to the design comes the model, which is made of the wood of the pear-tree; it is carved after the design, and in

* I have lately seen some very beautiful brass railings, of Birmingham manufacture, in front of the nave of Ely cathedral.

the same separate pieces, fitting into each other, they will be required by the casting process. Here we have in wood, the knobs, sockets, fluting, angles, that are to be reproduced in brass. From this wooden model a cast is taken in lead, which must be, of course, its reverse, as the cast is to produce a brass copy of the wooden model. The leaden cast is chased a little, then it is cast in brass, and well finished by chasing. Here is the pattern complete, ready to take its place with countless others; a hundred thousand of them are stowed away in such a manner as that they may be immediately found when wanted. With these models is laid by a great wealth of steel dies,—these are a large investment, and a very uncertain property. An ordinary-looking die may prove to be worth its weight in gold; while a pair which has cost fifty guineas may not be required to give out as many copies; and while there may be a dead loss on such an article, a batch of the commonest brass-headed nails, requiring the labour of thirteen pairs of hands, may sell at Calcutta with a profit of eighteenpence to each person.

Next comes the casting: for the material required, we must look to the Old Cemetery, the cost of which is largely defrayed by the sale of its red sand to the metal founders of the town. It is a very fine sand, remarkably free from impurities, and peculiarly adapted to the wants of the town under which it lies.

The mould consists of two boxes, which when filled are bolted together, the sand on their faces meeting, except in the hollow made by the pattern, and the channel through which the metal is to flow. The moist sand is firmly rammed down in each, round the pattern. Wherever there are recesses in the pattern, they are filled in with sand. If the article is to be hollow, it is “cored,” by the pattern being filled in with sand.

The cores of sand are built up like bricks, before the casting, and are removed afterwards by pushing out the sand through holes left for the purpose. When the articles are cool,

there is easy work for the boys, breaking off the cast articles from the metal in the channels, and then poking out the sand from the "cored" articles: they poke away as if they liked the business. The sand requires more removing than this, however. There is a churn in the yard, in which the articles are whirled round till all the sand is shaken out of them.

The technical term "finishing," means putting together the parts to make the articles complete; but as the word slips from my pen, it means putting the last finish of beauty. The technical "finishing," is done by the soldering with which we are familiar; as for the meaning of the word here, it leads to the counters of the burnishers. This work of burnishing is not done by women, as at most places, it is enough for the strongest men; they rub away with their hard steel burnishers, or with blood-stones; such common things as hinges and door-handles are polished by a brush and rotten-stone. We are now to see the final process of lacquering,—this process seems to spoil the beauty of the hue of the metal, but it is essential to the preservation of it. On entering the lacquering room, we see companies of women, who, considering the heat and smell of the place, sit comfortably enough; they earn good wages. The demand for female handiwork in Birmingham has so increased, that women's wages have risen lately about twenty per cent. The lacquer is laid on with a brush while the article is hot, so that the spirit of wine evaporates, leaving a coating of the gum; we need not say the commonest lacquer gives simply a deeper yellow to the brass.

"Now thought we," (says Miss Martineau, from whom many of the above remarks are borrowed), "what are we about, that we do not offer our reverence to the spirit of Art in Birmingham, as we do in old Italy, or any other place, that is only far enough off in space and time? Why do we dare to talk of Benvenuto Cellini, and other divine craftsmen, with reverence, while giving no heed to the extraordinary progress of popular art in our own towns, and our own day? It must

be from ignorance, for it is impossible to despise some things that are done among us now; but that ignorance makes our talk about Ancient Art and Foreign Art look very like affectation. We should like to know how many British travellers, who rush into enthusiasms about fountains in Germany and Italy, will trouble themselves to go and look at the fountain just opened in the Market-House, at Birmingham? And if they go, what will they say? How will they bring in the word "Brummagem"? Will they venture to apply it to the four bronze boys who represent Birmingham? There they are—the one shouldering his musket, and another blowing his bubble of glass,—boy fashion; and the third—thoughtful one—with his sextant in his hand, and a cog-wheel by his side; and the fourth proud and careful of his charge of an elegant vase! Will no charm be found here because these symbols are of native conception? Will the bronzes below be slighted, while sure of admiration, if fancied to be ancient? the four groups and garlands—the fish—the poultry—the vegetables—and the flowers and fruit? These things will not at least be despised by those who see most of them. The Birmingham people seem to enjoy their vocation, more than any townful of people we ever remember to have seen. Their taste, and their scientific faculties, find a constant gratification in the pursuit of their ordinary business. It is on behalf of persons who know little of the place, that one forms the wish, that we could all relish beauty, wherever it is to be found, and honour art, whatever may be the name of its dwelling-place. It is absurd to despise our later and prettier doings, because the roar of the furnace, and the whiz of tools, are among, not only the imagery of books, but the common sounds of every-day life."*

The brass and iron foundries of Messrs. Matchett and Sons, George Street, are very extensive and important works, comprising a variety of departments, and a large amount of well-

* "Household Words."

contrived machinery. The most interesting process to be seen here, is the casting of iron from the different moulds, which have been previously prepared. The models are manufactured of well-seasoned wood; they are pressed into, or piled around with the fine red sandstone of this district, and which, being of a small grain, is well adapted for giving a sharp impression of the model. This sand is used in a moist state, to cause it to cohere, and to retain the form impressed upon it after the model is withdrawn. A mould formed of sand is only available for one casting. This firm is continually producing hinges, castors, sash-pulleys for windows, and every article of brass and iron that is used in building. Their export trade is also great in Italian irons, knockers, &c., &c. They employ about 160 men.

The Scotland Street brass works, in the possession of Mr. John Moffatt, are also on a very extensive scale, and are increasing in the amount and extent of their productions. The number of manufactured articles in brass which are sent from these works into the home and foreign market, is almost beyond calculation. Chamber and pillar candlesticks, trays, burners, egg-cups, spittoons, &c., are got up at this establishment in great abundance, besides tubing by the mile.

NOTE X.

Pens, pins, and thimbles; screws, nails, hooks and eyes.

The immense demand for steel pens, increasing as it does with the spread of education all over the world, has made the manufacture one of the leading staples of the town; and this has been done within a comparatively short period of time. A few years ago, the luxury of a steel pen was known only to a select few. The advantages of its use, however, were rapidly acknowledged by the public, and the consequent increase of manufactories became absolutely necessitated. The prices obtained at first for their production were of such a

character as to stimulate the enterprise of even small capitalists, and sharpen the invention of the ingenious in improving and expediting the manufacture. Many curious anecdotes are told of the early struggles of some of our principal manufacturers when first engaging in the race of competition for the supply of this useful article. The difficulties encountered, and the shifts resorted to, in order to obtain credit for a small quantity of metal, by men who are now ranked among our largest capitalists, sound ludicrous enough. Some, who are now enjoying their *otium cum dignitate*, surrounded by all the luxuries which wealth can obtain, and even a refined and cultivated taste suggest, had to work in obscure garrets, night and day, without even the means of paying for the tools which they employed. So rapid, however, was their progress from adversity to prosperity, that one man in particular, we are told, opened accounts at different banks, feeling absolutely afraid to let it be known that he was realising money with such incredible celerity. This fact is worth recording, as illustrative, not only of the amazing success which has attended the speculations of some of our humblest tradesmen, but also of the determined energy which is characteristic of this class of our townsmen.

Mr. John Mitchell, of Newhall Street, was the first man in Birmingham to embark in this trade.* After him Mr. Mason, of the firm of Elkington and Mason, produced what were then called the Perryan pens, which obtained great popularity, and by which he is said to have amassed a large fortune. Others were speedily induced to take up the trade, and among the number was the gentleman whose large manufactory I have lately had the privilege to visit. The handsome and substantial building called Gillott's pen manufactory, in Graham Street, is one of the most exten-

* Mr. Mitchell was engaged as an amateur artist at the time he discovered the mode of splitting steel pens, after they had been tempered and hardened, which led him to turn his attention to the trade.

sive and best conducted establishments in the town. It is built on an excellent principle, both as regards the convenience of the proprietor, and the health and comfort of the many persons employed. These number between 600 and 700, among whom order and cleanliness are the pleasing and marked characteristics. The work-rooms are spacious, lofty, and airy—clean as a private residence, and bathed in a constant flood of light. The main study in the construction of the building has evidently been the permanent comfort of the immense number of young persons of both sexes constantly congregated for the purpose of labour. Neither have moral considerations been lost sight of: the females are for the most part secluded from the males; and where this cannot be entirely effected, a constant supervision insures the preservation of decorum. The result of these excellent arrangements is apparent in the healthy, cheerful aspect, and unexceptionable demeanour of the operatives of both sexes; and there is little doubt but that it is equally apparent in the balance sheet of the spirited proprietor, who is aware that humanity is a cheap article on the whole, and one that is pretty sure to pay in the long run.

The first thing to which my attention was directed was the manner in which the fine steel is rolled to the required thinness in a rolling mill, admirably constructed, on the premises. I was then introduced to a long gallery furnished with rows of the everlasting hand-presses, and each one in charge of a young woman. The first to whom I was introduced had a long ribbon of the rolled metal in her left hand, from which she was cutting blanks, each of which was to become a pen, at the rate of twenty to thirty thousand a day. The ribbon of metal was something less than three inches in width. Having cut as many pens from one side of it as the whole length—about six feet—will furnish, she turns it over and cuts her way back again, so managing it that the points of the pens cut in going down the second side, shall fall in the interstices between the points cut in traversing the first side. By this means nearly the whole

of the metal is cut into pens, and but a very insignificant remnant is left. The next operator receives these flat blanks, and, subjecting each one separately to a similar press, armed with a different cutting implement, pierces the central hole, and cuts the two side slits.

The pens are yet but flat pieces of metal, and that of a very hard and unmanageable temper; they have to be beat into cylinders and semi-cylinders; and to induce them to submit to that, they are now heated and considerably softened in an oven. On emerging from the oven they are stamped with the maker's name on the back; this is accomplished very rapidly by means of a die, which the operator works with his foot. Now comes the most important transformation they undergo: a young girl pops them consecutively into another of the omni-performing presses, from which they come forth as semi-cylinders, or if being magnum-bonums, or of a kind perfectly cylindrical, an additional pressure in another press finishes the barrel. The pens are then taken down stairs to the mouth of a small furnace or oven, where a man is piling them together in small iron boxes with loose covers and arranging them in the fire, where they are heated to a glowing red heat, and then suddenly withdrawn and plunged into a pan of oil. This ordeal renders them so extremely brittle that they may be crumbled to pieces between the fingers. They are now placed in cylinders, not unlike coffee-roasters, and made to revolve by the centrifugal force, by which they are in a great measure freed from the oil. After this they are consigned to the care of men whose business it is to temper them by a process of gradual heating over a coke fire until the metal is thoroughly elastic. The next process is one conducted on a large scale; the object of it is to rub down the roughness resulting from the various treatment they have undergone, and to impart a perfect smoothness to every portion of their surface. For this purpose they are packed in large quantities in tin cans, together with a considerable amount of sawdust; these cans are made to revolve horizontally at a great rate, by means

of steam; the pens triturate each other, owing to the rapid motion, and the sawdust takes up the impurities which they disengage. They come forth from these cans thoroughly scoured and semi-polished, and are now taken to the grinding room. This is a large apartment where a number of small grinding wheels, or "bobs," are whizzing round under the impetus of steam, each one in charge of a young man, or woman, and each projecting a stream of sparkling fire as the pens are momentarily applied to their surfaces. This grinding is a most essential process, as the pliability of the pen depends upon its proper performance; the object is to increase the flexibility of the metal of the pen at a point just above the central slit, by reducing its substance. The operator seizes the pen with a pair of nippers, not unlike a small pair of curling irons in shape, applies the back of it to the wheel for one moment, and the affair is over. After the grinding they are subjected, for the last time, to the operation of the press, at which a young girl completes the manufacture of the pen by giving it the central slit, without which it would never be in a condition to rival the goose-quill. The operation of slitting, precise and delicate as it is, is so simplified by the ingenious contrivance with which the press is armed, that it is performed with a rapidity almost rivalling that of the simplest operation, a single hand slitting upwards of a hundred gross a day. Nothing further now remains except coating the pens with a varnish, which gives them their rich brown hue, and preserves them from rust; after which they are packed in bags or boxes for sale.

Much of the success and prosperity of this great modern staple has followed the exertions of Mr. Mitchell, Mr. Gillott, and other enterprising men who were among the first to embark in it. But the trade then in its infancy, contained in it the elements of a gigantic development. The application of machinery, on a scientific basis, to the manufacture of steel pens, had been but limited, and their production consequently disproportioned to the increasing demand which their superiority to the quill,

and the gradual diminution of price had secured to them. The trade now required new auxiliaries to its progress, and a larger field for its growing energies; a new want had been created for the public, the race of competition had fairly commenced, and, as in all cases where increased efforts are necessitated by the course of events, and the nature of the market to be supplied, new agents are always to be found, so were young men springing up, possessing the requisite spirit, enterprise, and mechanical skill, to answer the enlarged demands of the steel pen trade. About twelve years ago, Messrs. Hinks and Wells commenced business under many disadvantageous circumstances, notwithstanding which they boldly entered the arena of competition, and soon contested the prize, even with the veteran chiefs of the trade. Undaunted by opposition, and undismayed by difficulties, they persevered in the arduous struggle; and the result was, as it always is in this country, where courage, honesty, and ingenuity combine to compass an object—the most cheering and unequivocal success. Happily, this celebrated firm possessed the necessary amount of mechanical ingenuity, and their talents were speedily brought to bear in the improvement and construction of machinery used in the manufacture of steel pens. They were soon able by an ingenious arrangement to make the common press do at one process, what was ordinarily the result of two or three processes. These presses (as previously observed), are worked by women, who are so dextrous that the average product of a good hand is 200 gross, or 28,000 per day, for ten hours. This however, did not satisfy Messrs. Hinks and Wells. Formerly the processes of cutting and piercing the steel were distinct branches, performed by separate presses. It became desirable that both these operations should be performed by one pressure, and Messrs. Hinks and Wells succeeded in constructing a beautiful machine which cuts out two pen blanks, pierces the centre holes, and cracks the side slits in them at one blow, with astonishing rapidity and regularity. This

machine is self-acting, requiring only a little girl to place the ribbon of steel to a pair of rolls, which lay hold of it and carry it forward under the tools which perform the above-described operations. My attention was drawn to several of these self-acting machines, in going over the immense premises belonging to this firm. They have also a raising machine, by which the pen blank is bent into the semi-tubular shape at great speed. The invention of these machines they secured by letters patent in 1844. The great producing powers of these machines are manifest from the fact that they have enabled the inventors to make themselves the largest steel pen manufacturers in the world, the quantity made at their steel pen works being weekly, 35,000 gross; and the quantity of steel used being upwards of 3 tons. They have one of the largest and best regulated establishments in the town, the number of persons employed nearly doubling that of any other house in the trade; and the recent spacious erections added to their premises in Buckingham Street give to their manufactory almost the air of a little town. Such has been the rapid and almost incredible progress of this spirited firm, neither of whom is scarcely yet in the prime of life, and therefore much more may reasonably be expected of them. Their last effort was the production of a steel pen on an entirely new principle. It had struck them that the ordinary steel pen, with all its merits, was not so perfect as it might be, if it possessed the advantage of the soft yielding backward action of the goose quill; they therefore undertook the task of making a nearer approximation to the quill, without sacrificing any of the inherent qualities of the steel pen. In their efforts to improve it, they thought they could not do better than take nature for their model. They therefore took the goose quill pen and examined it closely, in the act of writing, when they perceived a soft yielding backward action, in addition to the lateral action, or spreading open of the points; this they considered was the great and only advantage the goose quill pen possessed over the steel pen.

With this new hint they again examined the steel pen, and found, in consequence of the semi-tubular form in which all steel pens had been made, they only allowed of a rude straddling lateral action, which often occurring to too great a degree, divided the ink; and hence the constant cry against steel pens, "they will not mark". They found that so long as the semi-tubular form was adhered to, no combination of cracks and piercings would remove the difficulty; they therefore, in their new experiments, commenced with a piece of thin flat steel, which they split like the pen, and on applying a pressure upon it, as in the act of writing, they found that it possessed the desired soft backward action, but not the lateral action. This at once suggested the necessity of combining the flat and semi-circular shape together, which they have effectually done by cutting the pen blank into the requisite form, and making a depression across the pen at the top of the slit, in the form of an inverted arch. This simple contrivance gives to the pen that agreeable action which is so pleasant in the act of writing.

This firm have lately succeeded in perfecting a machine (for which they have taken out letters patent) for the purpose of expediting the production of steel pens, by combining the processes of marking and raising, which have hitherto been done separately.

Although the price of steel pens has fallen from eight shillings a gross in 1830, to sixpence a gross in 1850, the wages have improved, nominally and really, above twenty-five per cent., in consequence of the mechanical facilities of production. Some of the more skilled workmen get high wages; the tool-makers especially are remarkably well paid. The younger girls earn from five to seven shillings a week, the elder, twelve and fourteen shillings. Even at work they are generally well dressed. They have clubs, &c., by which they assist each other in sickness and in health; and in all their prudential arrange-

ments, as well as in their plans for occasional recreation, they are zealously and liberally encouraged by their employers.

It may be stated in conclusion, that about 3000 persons are now employed in the steel pen manufacture in Birmingham.

We have now to speak of the *pin* manufactories of Birmingham, though the production of this small, but useful article is not so much localised as many other branches of manufactures in metal. In London, Warrington, and Gloucestershire there are large factories, and the respectable firm whose works in George Street I have recently visited, belonged originally, I believe, to the latter locality. But the improvements by the new process, secured by patent, are principally carried on in Birmingham; so that, though we may not be able to answer the question so often proposed as to where all the pins *go to*, we may at least pretty nearly predicate where they all *come from*.

Before attempting, however, to describe the process of pin manufacture, I will give a slight sketch of wire-drawing, the preparatory stage of that useful little instrument. The iron to be drawn into wire comes from the iron-maker's in long coiled rods, about a quarter of an inch in diameter. The first step towards making these into wire, is to point one end of each of the rods; the second, is to cleanse the rods by placing them in a cast-iron barrel, which is driven in cold water by steam power for the space of ten hours, at the rate of thirty revolutions a minute. This process completely denudes the rods of every objectionable concretion; after this the rod is drawn down on a series of blocks through hard steel plates, perforated with holes, and graduated to the size of the wire, until the latter attains the required thinness; the fourth process consists in placing from two to three tons of this drawn wire in a cast-iron annealing pot, measuring seven feet deep, by three in diameter, where it is heated for seven or eight hours; after remaining twelve hours it is then drawn forth and allowed to cool.

It has next to be cleansed, which is done by immersing it in a solution of sulphuric acid. The number of times the wire passes round the blocks, or in other terms, the velocity with which the block moves, depends entirely upon the thickness of the wire. The thick wires are generally used for fencing, and telegraph purposes, while the finer are required for the manufacture of wire blinds, hooks and eyes, needles, brushes, &c., which consume great quantities. Electro, or copper-coloured wire, is drawn through wet acids, and is used for sofa and other springs. Tinned wire is produced by a swift, or wheel of wire running through boiling tin, after being prepared in acids; it is principally used for lacing and bottling purposes. Wire in a finished state is made up into bundles of 63lbs. each. Number one contains 84 yards to the bundle, and number twenty, 5280 yards. The finer gauges are made up into 12lb. parcels; number twenty containing 1056 yards, while number thirty-six measures 18,138 yards. This description of wire-drawing applies to the process carried on at the large establishment of Messrs. Edelsten and Williams, of Birmingham; and, with some exceptions, to Messrs. Baron Webster's, Penns, near Sutton.

Pins made of brass wire are yet manufactured by two different processes; the one by hand labour, which is the old-fashioned one—and the other by machinery. I shall describe the latter process, as it is fast superseding the former. The first thing is to draw the wire to the thickness required for the pin, round a series of blocks, already described. The second is straightening the wire, and cutting it into segments from six to eight inches long, which are afterwards pointed at each end on a rotatory file of steel, making about 6,000 revolutions per minute. These segments are then cut into what are technically called "shanks," or shafts, of sufficient length for the pin. The third process consists in heading the pin, which is exceedingly ingenious. The head is formed out of the same piece of wire as the shank

by an ingenious machine, invented originally, I believe, by an American, but perfected by Messrs. Edelsten and Williams. By the old method, generally pursued in Gloucestershire and other places, the heads are detached, and frequently slip off the shank: by this process the head forms *part* of the shank, is solidly constructed, and cannot possibly be separated from the pin. Here I observed the manufacture of every kind of pin, from the minutely-shaped one for the entomologist, to the blanket-pin; and some idea may be formed of the organization of the establishment, when I state that 8000 pins can be made every minute, or 6,000,000 per day, which, allowing 300 working days to the year, gives the almost incomputable number of 1,800,000,000. After the heading process is gone through, the pin is whitened with refined tin, precipitated by acids: it is then stuck upon paper suitable for its destined market; but even this process, odd as it may seem, is accomplished by a machine. Some thousands of the shining pins are thrown into a vessel formed of two plates of tin, shelving downwards towards the centre, where, however, they do not touch, leaving a space between them sufficiently wide for the shanks or shafts of the pins to fall through, but not wide enough to admit the heads. The pins thus dangling point downwards are, by some (to us) incomprehensible movements, drawn through and disappear, and immediately present themselves points foremost, and arranged in dozens, or otherwise, with equal intervals between each, to the paper, which a female holds in her fingers, ready folded for their reception. The whole two dozen, which constitute a row, are stuck through the paper at once: another row comes forward immediately, and the whole number of rows which go to a paper of pins are stuck in a very few minutes.

The machinery in operation in this establishment is made on the premises, under the inspection, and frequently from the designs, of the proprietors.

A similar establishment is that of Messrs. Peyton and Iles, Peel Works, Macdonald Street, where the following articles are manufactured in addition:—Every description of hooks and eyes, corset and drapery hooks, metal brace, and pearl shirt buttons and studs, pins and hair pins, and the patent embossed pocket pin tablets, which, for ornament, economy, and usefulness, are a perfect novelty. All their goods are made on the most approved principles, and stand unrivalled for the finish and superiority of their manufacture.

Messrs. Jones and Vec, of Barford Street, are also largely engaged in the manufacture of pins, &c.

The Screw Manufactory of Messrs. James, Bradford Street, is a very extensive and well conducted establishment; about two hundred hands are continually employed, principally females. The screw is made by machinery from beginning to end. After the wire is drawn, (which is done on the premises), it is cast off the required length, and headed by a most ingeniously constructed machine. It is then smoothed by lathes which are turned by steam power, then nicked and wormed,—the latter process is one of a very interesting character;—the screws are then counted and packed, ready for exportation. When the late Mr. J. began, no machinery was used; the present firm are able to produce as many as seven or eight thousand gross per week.

Messrs. Henn and Bradley's Crown Taper Wood Screw Manufactory, Rea Street, is well known for its production of an article that had been desired for years, the above firm having introduced and successfully carried out a perfect *taper screw*, eminently adapted for all the purposes for which a screw is required, but more particularly for pianoforte and the best class of cabinet makers. Henn and Bradley have spared no expense or labour in fulfilling their intentions of making *quality* their standard, for which they were awarded a first-class medal and notice at the Exhibition of 1851.

Having alluded to the manufacture of Nails in a former part of my work, I shall only introduce it again for the purpose of describing the different processes attending the production of those commonly denominated "cut nails." If, with his machinery at command, the modern nail manufacturer has to task all his powers of skill, industry, and perseverance, in order to meet his competitor in the market of the world, we need not dwell on the harrowing position of the poor nailor, who with his family has to eke out a miserable existence in the still lingering fight of manual labour against all-devouring machinery. To get a good idea of the nature and extent of the iron machines used in this manufacture, I would advise a look-in at Mr. Farmer's factory, Nos. 23 and 24, Lancaster Street, where the inquirer may hear (that is, if the incessant din of the machinery will allow him) the mysteries of each process explained, and also see a genuine specimen of the old-fashioned Birmingham manufacturer, in the person of the worthy proprietor, who amid the roar and smoke of his Vulcan-like smithy seems born to represent that happiness is *not* confined to "Arcadian fields" and idle "bowers of peace," but that it may live amid toil and business, under the begrimed cheeks and swarthy skin of industry, prompting the not unpardonable pride of a "monarch of all he surveys" in the murky atmosphere around him. Mr. Farmer I have known for some years, and if it were not for the original engagement with myself to abstain as much as possible from personal allusions, I might dilate still more upon his estimable qualities as a man and a tradesman.

The nail-cutting machine (which by the way is also manufactured here) is a ponderous mechanical contrivance for causing the sharp square edge of a massive cutting tool to rise and fall at regular intervals, and with irresistible power, some hundred times per minute. If the

nail requires a head—and they are made to pattern by these machines—additional mechanism is necessary. In this case the nail is caught, the instant it is cut off, in a kind of vice, which holds it fast while it receives a heavy blow from a lateral punch, cut so as to give the form of head desired. One of the greatest advantages of machine nail making is the economy of the material. When nails are forged, 20 to 25 per cent. of the iron is wasted; when they are cut, there is positively no waste at all to speak of. Some of the machines, which are used for cutting what are called brads, cut the heads complete without striking; and it would be possible to catch them as they fall from the machine, and to fit them together again into the form of the strip of iron from which they are cut; and if they were weighed before and after cutting, it is a question if any appreciable loss of metal would be found to have ensued. In addition to the machines, which cut but a single nail at each blow, there are others with broader blades, and of a more complex description, which cut as many as six nails at each descent of the tool. These are chiefly used for cutting the smaller sorts of headless nails used by shoemakers: the strips of iron from which they are cut are laid in trenches side by side, and a whole row of them cut at once; in this case there is no turning round of the metal to be cut, the motion which produces the wedge-like shape of the nails being effected by a modification of the machinery. So rapidly do some of these machines do their work, that several thousands of nails are produced in a single minute. The fruits of their labours lie around, packed in bags of about fifty pounds each. From twenty to thirty tons of iron are thus cut up weekly in this factory, producing probably not less than fifteen hundred millions of nails in a year. When we remember that nearly five hundred tons of iron are cut up into nails every week in Birmingham, and that each ton,

taking one sort with another, is calculated to produce a million of nails, by far the major portion of them being very small, we may form some idea of the cut nail trade, and may well wonder what becomes of so tremendous a product.

The hook-and-eye manufactory of Mr. J. H. Cutler, in Newtown Row, is of a most interesting character. The machinery which conducts the wire and forms it instantaneously into the shape of a hook, though apparently complicated, owing to the several functions it performs in the same moment of time, is, in reality, constructed on the most simple and beautiful principles. It can be worked with astonishing rapidity and regularity, as many as 300 hooks or eyes may be produced per minute, and it requires little or no superintendence. The wire from which the hooks and eyes are made, is coiled round a kind of spinning-wheel, standing at the back of the machine, which unwinds the wire as fast as it requires it, and deposits it in a receptacle placed beneath, in the shape of finished "eyes." The wire, entering at a small orifice in a steel plate at the left-hand side of the machine, is gradually propelled forwards from left to right, in the course of which journey it is not visible to the spectator; when it reaches a certain point in its progress, and at which it is visible, a portion sufficient for the formation of an eye is suddenly cut off by a small descending blade; at the same instant a small cylindrical steel nipple falls upon the centre of the detached inch of wire, and bends the central loop, while at the precise moment, two smaller nipples, one on each side, project above, round which the ends of the wire are firmly coiled by simultaneous blows from a couple of lateral punches. The "eye" being now complete, it would remain coiled round the three nipples, occupying the place of the next comer, were it not for the appearance of a little spider-looking claw, which springs forward like a "detective" upon his prey, and dashes it off into the drawer beneath, along with thousands of its predecessors.

I was particularly interested by the quick and subtle operations of these machines, rendered simple by the patient and intelligent explanations of Mr. Cutler, Jun., who accompanied me. They are worked by a steam-engine of eight-horse power, which also distributes its giant aid to such of the mechanical apparatus of the establishment as requires it. The shaft which communicates with the wheels of the machine performs 15 revolutions per minute, while the wheels, whose diameter is proportionably lessened, describe 45 in the same lapse of time. The process described above goes on during the whole of the day, and of course the number of hooks and eyes produced by these ingenious machines is almost countless. They present a remarkable triumph of mechanical skill, and it is difficult, while watching their beautiful evolutions, to get rid of the idea that there is some inherent intelligence within them; and to realize the fact, that all these complicated motions are generated by the aid of mechanical appliances, from the up-and-down movement of the piston-rod of a steam-engine. Military and ornamental buttons are also produced at these works, by the usual processes of stamping and pressing, and a number of persons of both sexes are constantly employed in dipping, silvering, japanning, polishing, and finishing, until each article is made to assume the brilliant appearance it wears on going into the market. Thimbles, studs, and pearl buttons, in all their endless varieties, are also produced here in great abundance. Mr. H. Hipkiss, in Newmarket Street, has a similar establishment, though on a smaller scale.

NOTE XI.

Swords, guns, percussion caps, our town supplies.

Swords, as we have before hinted, are supposed to have been made in Birmingham in the time of the Britons; but they never have been brought to such perfection as in our own peace-favoured time.

Messrs. Reeves, Greaves, and Co., Charlotte Street, appear to be the principal sword manufacturers of Birmingham, they having introduced many improvements in the manufacture, and obtained a prize at the Great Exhibition of All Nations. They produce swords of every variety, and for all parts of the world. I was shown the different processes in the production of this death-dealing instrument, from its first crude state, when the steel first comes from the forge, to its final completion, when it is fitted for immediate use. Suppose a mould of steel of sufficient length, when cut in two, to make a couple of blades: these are called sword moulds. The hollows on the sides of the blade are formed in the process of hammering, by means of variously shaped pieces of steel, fastened to the anvil, or fitted into a gauge which corresponds to the indentation to be made. The process of *hardening* succeeds, which is accomplished by heating the metal gradually, and by immersing it in water. It is then tempered, or brought back to a straw-colour, tested by striking it on the back and edge, and on each side, against a wooden block, and if the blade stands the test, it is handed to the grinder, who speedily removes with his immense stones all the irregularities of the hammering on its surface. The dexterity of hand required before it is transferred to the grinder, is one of the most noticeable features in sword making, as some workmen make little or no waste, whilst others spoil no inconsiderable portion of the blades they temper. To clean the grooves, stones with raised beads are used; then follows glazing, on what are called "bobs" of wood, with emery and glue; and finally, the process of polishing is effected by a series of wheels or "bobs," with fine emery and oil. The brilliant polish is obtained by powdered ironstone or crocus. The hilts of the best swords are forged out of steel, but most of the inferior makers get them cast from malleable iron; and

to give them the appearance of steel they are submitted to a process which makes them brittle, and comparatively unserviceable. The important qualities in a sword are—length of blade, strength and firmness, combined with lightness, elasticity, and easy balance, which make it readily wieldable, all of which are mainly dependent upon the tempering and grinding. The clearness of the steel, its freedom from blacks and flaws, or cracks, is likewise a desideratum; and lastly, its high finish and ornamentation. Some of the hilts are elaborately worked out of solid steel, requiring a great deal of labour. A piece of cast steel is drilled in holes as small as a pin's point, the latter being filed out bit by bit into shapes, which ultimately form the pattern. This kind of work is occasionally so minute that a workman has been employed on a single hilt for three months at a stretch.

Of course these remarks have reference exclusively to the highest class of sword makers, such as Reeves, Greaves, and Co., who employ the best hands and turn out the best work, just as much so as Westley Richards, or Tipping and Lawden, do in the manufacture of guns.

R., G., and Co. also manufacture a variety of edge tools, and very extensively the article of matchetts, a kind of large knife for cutting down the sugar cane. The steel is made on the premises, is beat out under large hammers, driven by steam power, and then ground and polished in a similar manner to sword-blades.

The transition from swords to guns is natural enough, and much more might be said of this manufacture than my limits will allow. I have already alluded to the fact of Sir Richard Newdigate being the first to establish our trade in this article, by recommending to William III. the capabilities of this locality to produce fire-arms, the trade in which had been confined to Holland, and attended with many difficulties. No adequate provision of fire-arms being made by the English

a

Ordnance Department of the last century, the emergency of 1793 was not prepared for. Lieut.-Col. Miller was employed for a year or two, conveying orders to the different gun manufactories in Germany, to procure arms for the British forces. But the manufacture of fire-arms was subsequently carried to such an extent in England, that from 1805 to 1815, 3,079,120 gun-barrels, and 2,935,787 locks, for the use of government, were manufactured in Birmingham alone, of which 1,827,889 were completed as muskets, carbines, &c. The supply was in general 30,000 stand of arms per month, or two in a minute! This number was exclusive of fire-arms manufactured here for the East India Company's Service during the same period, to the number, as it has been calculated, of about 1,000,000; and exclusive also of trading guns, fowling-pieces, &c. These facts are interesting, not only as regards the manufacturing capabilities of Birmingham, but as showing the amazing power of the British Government, in having such a manufactory in the centre of the kingdom, from which supplies of arms can be distributed in all directions, for defence or annoyance, far exceeding in amount all the fire-arms produced in the chief manufactories of France, from the banks of the Rhine to the foot of the Pyrenees.

The Ordnance Department purchased some land in Banbury Street, on the bank of the canal, and erected a proof-house for fire-arms, with an inspecting-room, for the purpose of proving, inspecting, and marking, according to the provisions of an Act of Parliament, all gun-barrels, locks, bayonets, &c., fabricated in the town. I have myself lately visited this establishment, and witnessed, almost with alarm, the "dread explosion."

"Whilst peals, like rattling thunder, shook the roof,
When nitrous powers proclaimed them standard proof:
The dread explosions, wing'd by echoes round,
Made Gods themselves to startle at the sound."

—BISSELL'S "POETICAL SURVEY," &c.

The following description, which is extracted from M. Dupin's work on the Military Forces of Great Britain, I believe to be substantially correct.

"The spot on which all fire-arms fabricated in Birmingham and its vicinity are proved, whether intended for the state or for the purposes of commerce, is a rectangular space, enclosed by walls from four to six yards in height. To this place there is but one entrance, in front of which is an exterior court, surrounded by a grating, and containing several pieces of cannon in battery, placed there merely to indicate that it is a military establishment. The buildings connected with the site for proving arms form three of the four sides of the interior court, at one extremity of which, and detached, is a small powder-magazine. One part of the range of buildings is occupied by offices; on the right as you enter is a foundry for balls, and on the left, the apartment for proving the arms. * * * * * The barrels are all proved with a double charge of powder and ball, and are not examined until twenty-four hours after the proof of firing. It is required that the saltpetre shall not appear on any part of the exterior surface. The stamp is then set upon those barrels that are good, while the bad ones are broken to pieces in a vice."

I understand by some, this test, severe as it is, is not considered sufficient to warrant the safety of a gun; and Mr. H. Hart, of the Lower Priory, is about to publish a book to show that the Proof-house mark *is a deception*. One would think, however, that no other ordeal could be substituted, so well calculated to prove the soundness of a barrel as that by which the Government is made to guarantee the safety of all weapons submitted to its operation.

The barrels leave the proof-house generally in a rough state, and they have now to be polished: in order to this they are first reduced to a smooth surface, either by the grindstone or by filing, or by turning in a lathe, the most expensive, but by far the most efficient mode. They are browned, and the beautiful twisted, veiny surface which marks the best stub barrels is rendered visible by a very

simple process; the workman merely wets the exterior with an acid solution: a rapid oxidation immediately takes place, revealing the spiral course of the thin strips of metal, and their junction when welded; the rust is then rubbed away with a brush formed of very small wires, and the barrel is finished off with a fine polish. As the reader may readily conceive, there is an astonishing difference in the price and real value of gun barrels; a musket barrel, and one perfectly safe and serviceable, may be made for the cost of a few shillings, while three times as many pounds may be paid for the barrel of a gentleman's fowling piece. Rifle barrels are forged in a similar way with others, but they are generally thicker and heavier than the common gun; the inside of a rifle barrel being first bored to a cylinder, is then grooved in parallel grooves by means of instruments adapted for the work; this, of course, has to be done before the interior of the barrel is polished.

The stocks of guns are generally sawn from stout planks of walnut wood. It is the business of the stocker to carve the stock from the rough block to the finished productions which we see in the gunsmiths' windows. There is almost as much difference in the value of the stocks, and in the workmanship bestowed upon them, as there is in the various sorts of barrels. A first-rate workman, in forming the cavity which is to contain the lock, will not cut away a single shaving of the wood beyond what is necessary to the free action of the lock. The locks are made in great numbers in Wolverhampton, and the excellence of this part of the fabric of a British gun has never been disputed, the manufacturers of this country having achieved and maintained an acknowledged pre-eminence in this department of gun-making. In guns and fowling pieces of the highest class, much labour and cost are incurred in the processes of ornamentation; some of the stocks are inlaid with plates of polished steel, artistically engraved with sporting subjects, such as groups of

birds; and the outer surfaces of the lock, the trigger-guard, and other portions, are sometimes inlaid with devices in gold and silver. There appear to be no limits to the expense which it is possible to incur in the getting-up of a single gun: as much as from £300 to £400 have ere now been expended upon a pet piece. The last operation in the manufacture of a gun is performed by the "putter-together," whose function is sufficiently described by the name he bears.

There are numberless inventions applicable to fire-arms which may be found among the gun makers of Birmingham. Amongst the most notable of these are, perhaps, the revolving pistols, with which half a dozen shots may be fired in as many seconds;* guns and pistols which require no attention to the nipple on the part of the user, but which supply themselves from reserves concealed in the butt-end of the stock; pistols for in-door practice, which may be charged with unexampled rapidity, and which will propel a ball with fatal force without gunpowder; and fowling pieces with safety locks which it is impossible to explode, either by accident or inadvertence.

The manufacture of rifles is also deserving of a word or two. The making of this instrument is based upon the principle that if the bullet can be made to spin round, or rotate on its axis while passing through the barrel, it will continue to worm its way through the air with more straightness of path than otherwise would be attained. The bullet from a gun will be projected straight forward, provided it passes equably through the barrel; but if, as is sometimes the case, it rubs more against one side of the barrel than the other, from being unevenly rammed in, it will be diverted from its right course, and curve round while passing through the air, so that the marksman misses his aim.

*I have seen some beautiful specimens of this article at Mr. W. Collins's, 111, Steelhouse Lane.

Birmingham has suffered in her gun trade of late years from the competition with Belgium; Liege has, in fact, become the continental storehouse for fire-arms, and this is mainly owing to the fact that labour is cheaper with the Leigois than with us; and that therefore in the manufacture of low-priced articles, in which the cost of labour forms the chief element of expense, we cannot successfully compete with them. Further, the Belgian makers are not put to the expense of proving their weapons, which alone would give them a considerable advantage in a market where cheapness carries the day. In point of quality and workmanship, the Belgic weapons will not stand comparison with those of our own makers. Messrs. Tipping and Lawden, Constitution Hill, (whose works I have been over), Messrs. Hollis and Co., St. Mary's Square, and Mr. Westley Richards, High Street, are among the principal manufacturers.

I must not omit to notice the manufacture of percussion caps, which is connected with the fire-arm department of industry, and which, though apparently insignificant, gives employment to a great number of hands, and requires no little skill to perfect. The machinery in common use for making caps was the invention principally of Mr. Richard Walker, of Graham Street, in this town, an ingenious and enterprising man, the single-handed architect of his own fortune, and even now the largest manufacturer of caps in the country. He kindly gave me permission to go over his manufactory whenever it suited me, in order to witness the working of his machinery. This, in some respects, is exceedingly simple; in others complicated; in its general operation most effective. There are caps at this establishment fitted for every possible size and variety of fire-arms, from those used in the smallest nipple up to those required for instruments of the most destructive calibre. The average supply from this manufacturer to Her Majesty's Board of Ordnance is one ton a month, containing a million of caps; and the same quantity to the Hon.

East India Company. The process of manufacturing this little instrument is as follows :—Suppose a strip of metal about four and a quarter inches wide, one sixteenth of an inch thick, and about five hundred yards long. This strip is passed through an ingeniously constructed machine, which cuts diagonally thirteen small crosses or blanks at a time, and drops them into a box below. The machine performs one hundred and forty revolutions in a minute; so that five hundred and seventy blanks are struck in a second. This is the first stage of the manufacture of a cap. The machine, indeed, may be called self-feeding, for when the coil or ribbon of metal is once within its grasp, it never loses hold until the whole length has its surface cut with the nicest precision. The blanks are then put, one by one, into a screw press, worked by the hand, which gives them the form of a cap; and so dextrous are some of the hands (mostly women) engaged in this process, that they can make 15,000 caps per day. They are next cleaned, then primed with a detonating compound at the rate of twenty-one gross per minute; after this they are dipped in a simple machine, containing a prepared solution, forty-two at a time, which renders the priming impervious to the moisture of the atmosphere. The caps are then put into a stove or muffle to dry, great care being necessary to prevent explosion; then follows glazing, and lastly, a minute examination of each cap, when the manufacture is completed.

NOTE XII.

Saws, iron-bedsteads, stoves, the world to bless.

Until a late period, Sheffield had almost monopolized the trade in saws, as she does in knives, razors, and other kinds of cutlery; now, however, Birmingham is pushing its claims to distinction for the manufacture of this, as well as its countless other articles of general utility. The making of the steel of which this article is composed, gave to Sheffield an advantage which she still enjoys, and which will enable her to

maintain her acknowledged preëminence. In the late Exhibition, however, Birmingham gave ample evidence of its power and determination to dispute the supremacy of its northern sister in the production of saws. Messrs. Atkin and Sons distinguished themselves by their specimens in this manufacture; and, in consequence of their increased trade, have erected a large manufactory, called "The Sheffield Works," in Rea Street South, adjoining the premises in Barford Street, in which they have, for upwards of a quarter of a century, carried on the manufacture of saws, files, gimlets, skates, joiners' and edge tools, &c. The old established plane trade of William Moss, of this town, and the celebrated make of Ames, of London, (formerly Sims,) have been more recently added.

Much difficulty has been experienced in removing the prejudice, that these articles could not be well made out of Sheffield; but Messrs. A. and Sons, being themselves practical workmen, their articles have reached such excellence, that their manufacture ranks equal to the best maker of Sheffield, and, in some markets, obtains the preference. In the new works every appliance for the perfection of their articles which their long experience suggested, has been well arranged: and with the assistance of two engines, they will increase the quantity as well as improve the quality of their productions.

Messrs. Winfield and Son, of the Cambridge Street Works, are the proprietors of the original patent for metallic bedsteads, and patentees of the continuous pillar and other improvements; and at these works immense numbers of these indispensable articles are fabricated at all prices, from the lowest to the highest, and of every variety of design, from the plainest to the most elegant and ornamental; and not only bedsteads, but everything which the most fastidious man can require with which to adorn his residence or conduce to his comfort, supposing only it can be manufactured in metal, is here to be found, and in such wholesale quantities as to per-

plex the choice of the purchaser. Bedsteads of every form and style, from the couch of the cottager to that of the courtier, many of them most gracefully conceived and elaborately executed, show that talent of no mean order has been called into requisition. Not only bedsteads, however, but a multitude of other articles in brass and bronze, such as cornices, curtain bands, pier and console tables, balustrade bars, and gas-fittings of all kinds, of which Messrs. Winfield are the largest manufacturers in the world; most, if not all of these are characterised by some originality in conception, and attest the ingenuity of the workmen and the extensive resources of the establishment.

I shall have here to return for a moment to what is called the "brass toy trade," in order to do justice at once to this spirited firm, and to one of the most important branches of the staple commerce of Birmingham. "Despite its nominal insignificance, this trade has probably contributed more than any other to the prosperity of our busy town. And no slight activity and energy are required to enable the principal firms in this branch of manufacture to send out, to the very ends of the earth, all that endless variety of articles of furnishing application, in which brass figures are the most important fundamental material. It has been estimated that at the beginning of the eighteenth century the consumption of brass in Birmingham amounted to about 100 tons annually, and it may safely be affirmed that it reaches 10,000 tons at the present time; upwards of 7,000 individuals find employment in the various departments of the trade.

"The Cambridge Street Works were originally commenced in 1820, upon a comparatively limited scale. So greatly have they increased, however, since that period, that upwards of 800 workmen now ply their busy craft within the limits of the factory. Of the above-mentioned number, 200 are engaged in the manufacture of metal bedsteads; an equal number in the fabrication of the best quality of gas-fittings,

and the remainder in the production of stamped brass ornaments for upholstery furnishing, metal tubing, wire, and the partial preparation of some of the objects which are subsequently completed by smaller manufacturers. An idea of the extent of its operations may be gathered from the fact that 130 tons of copper and 45 tons of zinc are annually consumed in the making of brass, and that upwards of 300 of the ordinary iron bedsteads are sent off every week. Many very important improvements in the construction of metallic bedsteads have been invented and introduced in this establishment.* Here every process of manufacture necessary for the completion of the articles produced, is carried on upon the premises. Here is a reduplication, to all appearance, of the rolling mills of Messrs. Muntz, with all their ponderous machinery, as well as smelting furnaces, where the metals are mixed and refined, and cast for rolling, either for consumption on the spot, or for other manufacturers. Here are the largest engine and the highest chimney in the town. Here are powerful machines for drawing metal piping, and others for coating rods of iron in suits of shining brass. Here may be seen innumerable castings of exquisite design, combining elegance with usefulness. Here are forges, and foundries; carvers, turners, polishers, and fitters, and an army of men variously employed in processes which to specify would but be to go over ground we have already trod. The interior of this vast manufactory is a little world of industrial and artistic activity; abundance of room, of light, and of air, and the prevalence of order, decorum, cheerfulness, and cleanliness, being the chief characteristics of the scene.

The results of these manifold and well-ordered labours are to be seen in the greatest perfection in the extensive show-rooms, where many designs of singular beauty may be found accessory to purposes of utility and personal comfort.

* Digby Wyatt.

Perhaps, in an artistic point of view, the pendant lamps and chandeliers form the most attractive objects. These vary much in design and construction—the burnished metal contrasting in some with the quiet hues of the beautiful productions of the patterns in white Parian.

There is one spot, however, in these works which more than any other enlists our sympathies, while its uses demand our admiration. It is a spot sacred to the cause of education. While industry presides in the workshops during the day, the juvenile portion of the establishment are invited to partake of the blessings of moral and mental culture in the evening. I was particularly interested with this novel and beautiful feature in the establishment, and still more so on witnessing the delightful spirit with which it was conducted.

The school-room is a noble, lofty, and spacious building, whose interior reminds one of a small chapel, being capable of accommodating 200 or 300 boys, having an organ in the gallery, immediately fronting the schoolmaster's table—for music forms one of the media of instruction. The school is under the superintendence of the principals, assisted by six well-qualified masters from the clerks employed in the works. Some of these I was informed had been educated in the school which now witnessed their efforts to impart the same blessing to others. Mr. Atkins is the able assistant to whom the chief power and responsibility is delegated in the absence of the Messrs. Winfield; he is admirably adapted for the task, and the school is rapidly progressing under his management. He told me that he met with little difficulty in maintaining order, and inspiring a general sense of the value of knowledge, and a respect for the excellent principles inculcated; that many of the lads had gradually reformed under the influence of the system of moral discipline administered; and that now, instead of fights and disturbances, too common at one time—when the hours of labour had ceased, they quietly separated in the evening each to his own home, though that home, alas!

was too frequently the scene of other pursuits, and the seat of another atmosphere. Some of their parents were bad and immoral persons, totally insensible of the advantages under which their children were training. In other instances the poor little fellows were without parents,—perhaps (under Providence) a still happier lot—and had to earn their own living at that early age, and be at the works early every morning. The Messrs. Winfield are doubtless conferring a lasting though unostentatious benefit upon society; they are sowing the good seeds, the fruits of which shall “be seen after many days;” and I can easily imagine that the experience of the senior principal as a magistrate has operated on his kind heart in thus attempting to arm those of the rising generation under his employ with the only, sure weapon against those temptations to crime to which the children of poverty and ignorance are exposed. May God speed him in his righteous endeavours after good! The building of the school-room, I am told, cost £1,200. The books and necessary materials for study are supplied gratuitously by the proprietors, who have also erected, contiguous to the school-room, a convenient lavatory, where the lads may bathe their swart faces, and enter upon the pursuit of knowledge with clean hands. I look upon that school-room as the crowning ornament of the establishment, and I trust it will continue to be an honour to the town, and an example to other manufactories.

Messrs. Peyton and Harlow, at the Bordesley Works, have also a very extensive establishment, employing a great number of hands in the manufacture of brass and iron bedsteads, and other articles of furniture in metals. Many important improvements in the construction of metallic bedsteads have emanated from this firm, and have been secured to them by letters patent. Great skill is displayed in the manufacture of the articles produced.

Among the many inventions of the day for improving the decoration and increasing the comfort of our houses, certainly not the least important is that of Mr. Martin Billing, of Charles Henry Street, who has patented a method for constructing Brass Cornice Poles that obviates the disagreeable jingling noise made by the brass rings sliding along the pole. The old cornice poles were merely brass tubes, but by Mr. Billing's method they are lined with zinc, and are subjected to repeated maundril rollings, which hardens the outer surface and much improves their appearance. But the great advantage of this method of construction is that the sound is deadened, as the curtain rings are also manufactured on the same principle, and the combination of the two metals completely destroys the jingling sound and metallic grinding so familiar to those who have been accustomed to the use of the old cornice poles. The new method of construction, moreover, renders the poles more durable, and less liable to split; they take a finer polish, and the beauty of the article is altogether considerably enhanced, and that, too, without any increase in price. The invention is equally applicable to picture rods, window laths, brackets, &c.; and from the great • and increasing demand for the various articles, it is apparent that the public quite appreciate the value of the invention.

In stoves, we have Mr. Thomas Walker, 58, Oxford Street, who has invented some very useful articles, which appear to have been highly successful. One is called a self-feeding stove, which is remarkable for its economy in combustion; it requires fuel but once a day, shows a bright fire, is free from dust and effluvia, and having a radiating surface attached, is capable of producing a large amount of heat at a very trifling cost. He has also introduced a patent tubular gas stove, which is the most economical of its kind that has been hitherto invented, especially adapted for rooms in which there are no flues, as it requires no chimney. There is one jet of gas which burns under the centre of each

tube; the heat ascends up them to the top; it then descends between two large inner cylinders, the centre one of which it enters at the bottom and escapes from it into the apartment by the ventilator at the top of the stove. Mr. W. has also invented an ingenious rotary steam engine (which I have seen act), and damper regulator, for indicating the pressure of the steam in the boiler, by which 40 per cent. is saved in fuel.

Messrs. George Price and Co., 102, Park Street, have gained considerable celebrity by their Pillar Stove, which possesses peculiar advantages. Its chief recommendations are, first, the small quantity of air required to support the combustion in order to warm a large room; second, its economy of fuel, uniform temperature, and last but not least, its adaptation to all kinds of fuel, all of which burn equally well, without the liability of offensive smells, smoke, or dust. They have also introduced a stove called the "Patent Argand Gas Stove," requiring neither piping nor flues, and free from noxious vapours, as well as Cooking, Laundry, Lacquering, Tailors', and Hatters' Stoves.

Mr. John Kimberley, of Hurst Street, has a large demand for his Patent Gas Stoves, which in a variety of forms he exhibits in his extensive show rooms. Their recommendations are many and peculiar. In the first place, it may be erected in any situation most convenient for the purposes required. It is lighted in a moment, being no more trouble than the ordinary gas jets, and does not require either flue or piping; it is secure from all danger, and is entirely free from soot or dust of any description. The heat may be regulated to any degree required, and may at once be gradually increased or decreased at pleasure. Its economy and convenience for culinary purposes are of equal importance; many of the most celebrated cooks having spoken highly of its steady, regular heat, without any deteriorating effect on the atmosphere, so objectionable in the generality of stoves. They are made for every class and for every purpose, and their construction has

done away with a great deal of the hitherto obnoxious effluvia from gas stoves, as the lime apparatus effectually purifies the hot air from all carbonic acid, sulphur, &c., &c. They have given the greatest satisfaction to the public, as the constant stream of orders Mr. Kimberley is always receiving fully proves.

On the eve of going to press I was shown a Gas Stove, just patented by Mr. E. Edwards, 49, St. Paul's Square, which seems to possess all the advantages of its predecessors, with none of their defects. The burners are placed in a large centre cylinder, through which the hot air rises into a chamber at the top; it is then made to pass through a series of descending tubes until all the heat is absorbed by the stove, and the noxious products of combustion finally pass in a cool state through a pipe underneath the floor, into the open air; the whole of the heat generated by the combustion of the gas being radiated into the apartment, whilst every thing of a prejudicial character is carried away. The stove seems to be characterized by great simplicity and completeness of action. It is the intention of Mr. E. to manufacture them in elegant designs, and there is no doubt they will come into very general use. I entered an apartment in which one had been burning for several hours, and the atmosphere of the room was perfectly free from effluvia, whilst the genial and comfortable warmth was very agreeable.

Messrs. Mapplebeck and Lowe, of the Bull Ring, are celebrated for the production of this article, as well as for almost every other; but their chief fame is in the manufacture of kitchen ranges and agricultural implements, for which they have long been considered unequalled. I have been over their extensive premises, and delighted with the manufacturing department, as well as with their beautiful show rooms, in which almost every article of Birmingham manufacture finds an appropriate place. Their immense collection of agricultural implements, for which they obtained a prize medal at the great

Exhibition, are shown in suitable premises in Jamaica Row.

Mr. Thomas Jones, of Cecil Street, Newtown Row, also manufactures register, stove, and other grates, as well as fenders and fire-irons.

Messrs. Samuel Baker and Co., General Ironfounders, of Bishop Street, manufacture stove grates on an extensive scale, and have show rooms in Digbeth, No. 78, similar to Jones, of Bradford Street, and the Phoenix Foundry, Broad Street.

NOTE XIII.

Locks, lamps, and tin-plate ware upon us press.

It is only lately that Birmingham has started into prominence as a producer of locks. A few years ago Mr. Edwin Cotterill, who had succeeded in improving many other articles appertaining to the business he was brought up to, turned his attention to lock-making, which appeared to him to have scarcely kept pace with the times, seeing that almost every newspaper announced some new triumph of the burglar. The result of his repeated and anxious experiments was, the perfecting of the most secure lock that has been known, so that we are now placed in a position, in the production of this as well as many other articles, to outvie even the great metropolis.

Much has been said about this very ingenious invention, and although it is sad to reflect that it is even more necessary in the present enlightened and christian age to be on our guard against the depredations of our neighbour, when even the rude barbarian, we are told, enjoys a security, not in locks and bolts, but in the goodwill of his brother savage, to which we are strangers—still, so long as the stern necessity exists—and exist it will as long as the institution of private property—such men as Mr. Cotterill are undoubtedly entitled to the grateful recognition of their countrymen. He has supplied the public with a lock which may challenge the most skilful

burglar to violate. In fact it may be said now to take its stand as unequalled in its pretensions as a security against the "picking and stealing" propensities of that socially demoralised class, who are unhappily ever seeking to prey upon the more industrious and prosperous part of the community. We say this because the other celebrated locks have been found to be vulnerable to the attempts of Mr. Hobbs, the ingenious American mechanic. This, however, though repeatedly challenged by Mr. C., who offered strong pecuniary and other inducements, he would not undertake to pick, and therefore we may fairly conclude it was beyond his power. Independently of this fact, there are numerous testimonials from the most proficient and distinguished individuals, all pointing to the same conclusion, viz., that this is the only secure lock extant. It is of course impossible here to give a detailed exposition of its principles, or of their simple and beautiful adaptation to the single purpose of its construction. Like all productions of true merit, it is rapidly advancing in the estimation of the public, and its inventor will no doubt be speedily rewarded and appreciated.*

In consequence of the great success of his lock, Mr. C. has disposed of his other patent rights, together with the old-established corkscrew business, to Mr. Charles Hull, who now occupies the premises in Henry Street, Ashted. This gentleman appears to have succeeded not only to the trade, but to the ingenuity so long peculiar to the spot, for he has lately patented an improved nutcracker, which has a most extensive sale. Mr. Cotterill has been for some time established in New Street.

The tin-plate trade is now assuming considerable importance among the staples of the town. The principal

* "In the 16th century, locks and keys were scarcely known. The doors of the magnificent gallery of Hardwicke, though richly inlaid with ebony, opened with a common latch."—MRS. STONE'S CHRONICLES OF FASHION.

manufacturers are—Messrs. Griffiths and Browett, Bradford Street; Messrs. Rea and Webb, St. Paul's Square; Messrs. J. H. Hopkins and Son, Granville Street Works (who have a most extensive and commodious establishment, in which he has introduced the japan business); and Mr. Samuel Tonks, Great Hampton Street. The latter gentleman is engaged in an extensive trade, and his premises are admirably adapted for the manufacture of the numerous articles produced. Lanterns, dish-covers, trays, candlesticks, tea and coffee pots, spittoons, and japanned articles, such as letter cases, envelope boxes, &c., are manufactured there. The proprietor employs about a hundred workpeople, and the processes and improvements adopted in his establishment are highly interesting. Mr. T. has introduced several himself, and contemplates the adoption of still farther facilities, by the employment of machinery, which he now uses to a considerable extent. He already produces thirty gross of candlesticks per week.

The manufacture of Lamps (which, properly speaking, comes under the head of brass-founding) occupies now a conspicuous place among the staples of Birmingham; no trade presents more gorgeous objects to our admiration, and none is more completely ruled by the capricious will of fashion. Every week brings out new patterns of elegant designs to attract the eye of the purchaser, and the rivalry in artistic excellence and elaborate ornamentation has brought this article to a perfection it has never known before. When I mention such houses as Messenger, Stroud, (late Ratchiff,) Potts, Toy and Son, *cum multis aliis*, it will be sufficient to claim for this branch of our staples some consideration. The latter firm have lately taken to the celebrated establishment at Soho, so rich in its associations of our local manufacturing history,—for many years occupied by Messrs. Boulton and Watt. These extensive works, so long hidden from the public gaze by

high walls and thick over hanging foliage, are now seen from the main road, and at once robbed of their long-loved seclusion by the bold hand of modern innovation. This change, though involving the loss of much that was pleasing and picturesque, is nevertheless attended with some advantages, for no one can look down upon the spacious and noble building, with its broad descending carriage-roads, and not feel that its exposure yields an additional ornament to the neighbourhood. The premises have, of course, undergone some renovating process ; but I was informed by one the firm, that, generally speaking, they were in excellent repair. The Messrs. Toy call themselves Gas Machinists and Founders, and are extensively employed in the manufacture of chandeliers, lamps, and candelabra in bronze, ormolu, electro-plate and crystal glass ; gas lamps, pillars, branches, and fittings of every description ; together with patent wrought-iron tubes and fittings, as well as brass and iron bedsteads. This description will convey some idea of the immense responsibility attached to the conducting of such an establishment. Upon going over the works, I saw sufficient to excite my admiration in the different models of gas lamps and chandeliers, which appear to form the principal study of the proprietors, but more particularly in the gigantic mills for rolling metal, drawing copper, brass, tin, and composition tubes ; and in the extensive foundry for the manufacture of iron gas tubes and fittings. When the additions and alterations are made in this establishment, it will not only resume its former glory, but I should say it will be one of the most complete and extensive in the kingdom. They will make all their own metal on the premises.

Messrs. John Thomas Stroud and Co., successors to John and Charles Ratcliff, 140, Suffolk Street, are largely engaged as manufacturers of lamps, chandeliers, candelabra, &c. I have been over their extensive establishment, where every descrip-

tion of gas chandeliers, from the plainest and cheapest to the most elaborate, are manufactured, in every style, from the Gothic to the richest modern designs, some with Bohemian glass dishes and vases, decorated with enamelled and gilt ornamentation, others tastefully engraved. A few of the patterns require special attention : one a chandelier of six lights, representing the "Palm and Banana leaves," artistically arranged ; another one, the "Vine," in all its luxuriance ; a third in the Grecian order, and several others in the Elizabethan, Louis Quatorze, and Italian styles, are of the very first class ; also pendants, brackets, mantel lights, mirrors, &c., &c., in almost endless variety ; oil lamps of all kinds, and suitable to all climates, comprising boat lamps, sideboard lamps, university lamps, bracket lamps, table lamps, hall lanterns, &c. ; moderator lamps, with a variety of improvements, amongst which the patent collapsing cotton-holder is not the least important. By this clever contrivance, no cotton stick is required, the cotton wick being fitted to the holder with the greatest ease. The patent square moderator lamp, (manufactured here only), is much more elegant than the round French shape, being of a purely classical appearance, and consequently more suited to the English taste. Rack-wheel lamps, to burn under the punkah, of every description. In this lamp the proprietors have lately patented a great improvement, the cotton being raised by a knob at the bottom of the dish, instead of at the side of the lamp, as formerly, which is much more convenient to increase or decrease the light. Also, the patent diamond oil lamp, in all its forms, which lamp is allowed to be the most economical ever invented ; the combustion is so complete, the lamp burns with a brilliancy never before obtained. The patent Victoria lamps, to burn fat or oil, are manufactured at this establishment solely, in very large quantities, for Australia, &c. Also, every description of candle lamps, for Palmer's and other candles, candle chandeliers, wall brackets, candelabra, lustres, bronzes, inkstands,

&c., &c., in ormolu, electro-plate, bronzed, bronzed and relieved, and artistic and Florentine bronzes.

Messrs. Turner and Rollason, of 63, Rea Street, are also large manufacturers of gas lamps and chandeliers, and fittings of every description. They employ about 140 pair of hands, and aim more at producing quantities for the market.

I have seen some very beautiful specimens of lamps at Messrs. William Blews and Sons', Bartholomew Street Works, manufacturers of candle and ship lamps, (for which an Exhibition Prize was awarded), gas fittings, &c. Here are also produced standard weights of every civilized country in the world; and bells for houses, clocks, turrets, railways, ships, negroes, and cattle; of the latter immense quantities are used for the South American and Australian market. A few years ago, there was a great demand for bronzed bells, to supply the palace of some Eastern Prince, who had several thousands for purposes of decoration.

Mr. Stephen Tonks, 157, Cheapside, has an old-established manufactory of lamps, chandeliers, and gas fittings, particularly the latter article, for which the house is much celebrated.

Mr. Benjamin Marsh, 83, Coleshill Street, manufactures candlesticks, lustres, superior gas chandeliers, candelabra, &c., in bronze, ormolu, and electro-plate, and has a large and brilliant assortment in his show room, including an infinite variety of designs, particularly in candelabra, inkstands, &c.

Mr. Joseph Chatwin, 29, Moseley Road, is a manufacturer of chandeliers and gas burners.

Messrs. Abbott, Brothers, Whittall Street, are also lamp and chandelier manufacturers.

Messrs. Salt and Lloyd, 17, Edmund Street, are large manufacturers of lamps and lanterns for railways and shipping, particularly of patent Vesta and solar lamps, chandeliers, bronzes, &c.; gas lamps and patent generating portable gas lamps. They have also a patent for a new

mode of stamping, whereby a great economy of time is obtained.

Messrs. Messenger and Sons, Broad Street, are manufacture lamps and gas fittings in every department; also patented railway lamps on approved principles, adapted for signals and other lights, and metallic bedsteads; and are general artificers in ornamental brass and iron work. This firm was undoubtedly the first to produce works of artistic skill in this town, and has for a long series of years maintained a high reputation. Very many of the most extensive artistic works in this country have been produced at this establishment, and we propose only to enumerate a few generally known, as a fair sample. In our own town we have the beautifully designed brackets projecting from the walls of the interior of the Town Hall, and also a work generally and deservedly admired—the Fountain in the Market Hall, which we aver to be a combination of artistic skill unequalled in Europe. Since the erection of this work, it has received the attention and admiration of the first authors of our day, not excepting Dickens in his “Household Words,” who ranks it with the works of Benvenuto Cellini. Some years ago, they also executed the magnificent staircase and other artistic works for the Duke of Northumberland, Northumberland House, London, well known to every connoisseur of art, and remaining to the present time unequalled. The father of the present proprietor was the first to commence such works in this town, now nearly fifty years ago, and when art producers were so scarce, that any workman required could only be obtained by a long residence in London, and they have at the present time some obtained by such means. At this establishment may be seen a model-room, of such an accumulated magnitude, that the metal alone weighs more than thirty tons, and among which may be discovered works of art by our first artists, and even of the celebrated Sir Francis Chantrey, which he executed for the late Mr. Messenger previous to his renowned success as a great

sculptor. In consequence of the vastness of their models, this firm has the power, by adaptation, of producing works at a moderate cost, quite out of the reach of younger establishments, who, of course, must model and design all articles required for the embellishing and illuminating public buildings. We advise those who admire works of artistic skill, even as a curiosity, to visit this "model or pattern room," being a mine of usefulness and wealth to any establishment. Chandeliers, lamps, candelabra, and all articles for gas or oil, may be obtained here, from the most costly to the most ordinary, and of the cheapest description. In the article of metallic bedsteads, this firm stands peculiarly fortunate in having produced one for the present Pope, the Emperor of Russia, and the Emperor of Brazil; a fact unprecedented in any other manufactory. In conclusion, very extensive experiments have been made by this firm as to the best mode of producing light for signal and other lamps for railways, having regard to effect and economy, and there are very few railways in Europe that have not a portion of their manufacture. This eminent establishment can not only say what it may do, but very extensively show what it has done, and thereby demand that credit so justly its due.

Mr. William Potts, 16, Easy Row, is also a large manufacturer of gas or oil lamps, brackets, and chandeliers, candelabra, clock stands, articles of vertu, &c., and is the sole maker of his own patent picture-supporting moulding. Mr. P. has lately brought out a very important novelty, in the shape of "SEPULCHRAL MONUMENTS," which he has patented, and which bids fair not only to supply a want which has been long felt by the more thoughtful, but also to elevate the taste of the community, and render the mode of gratifying it easily attainable. We all know that there is nothing at present, in monumental art, between the crude and miserable productions of the stone-mason, and the refined but expensive compositions of the sculptor. It is

the object of Mr. P. to supply this deficiency, by attaching the features of the bronze designs, which appeal to moral or religious sentiments, to architectural framings or supports in marble or stone, as applicable to mortuary tablets, or grave-yard monuments, and thus to correct the wide and undeveloped taste of the age, and exalt and dignify the human affections, as manifested in those solemn and painful tributes which it devolves upon the living to offer to the dead. Mr. P. purposes to accomplish this by *cheapening* monumental art, and embodying it in such forms and materials as shall bring it within the reach of all classes, and thus destroy those objectionable distinctions hitherto arising from the great cost of artistic productions, or limited pecuniary means. Mr. P. says he was led to adopt the invention from a knowledge that the deposition of metal work insured true types of the model, with its expression unimpaired, while the undercut surfaces allowed of perfection in outline, and of the bold shadows on which artistic force so much depends. He thus hopes to aid in popularising high art, by bringing it to bear on works imbued with religious sentiment for the mass of the public. Mr. P. has extended his theory of combining deposited metal work with marble, to the important subject of mantel-pieces ; and it will be evident to all how interesting those structures, so constantly surveyed in our climate, will become, when the panels on the line of the entablature are occupied by alto-relievo groups in bronze. The patentee intends selecting some of his subjects for illustrations from the dramatic works of our great Shakspeare, and to commence with Hamlet. I was much delighted with the specimens of what are, strictly speaking, works of art, of his own manufacture, submitted to my inspection by Mr. P., in his beautiful show-rooms.

NOTE XIV.

Among the foremost stand those works of fame,
Whose uses now a UNIVERSE may claim.

Among the many celebrated manufactories for which Birmingham stands distinguished, the Universe Works of Messrs. John and Edwin Wright (established nearly a century), the extensive rope and twine manufacturers of Dartmouth Street, occupy a prominent position. It will scarcely be believed we have such a complete establishment in a town whose fame has hitherto been associated with the production of those articles of hardware which form the staple of the district. But such has been the success of these enterprising gentlemen, that they have recently erected vast works, nearly 600 feet in length, for the manufacture of the above articles. This immense building is galleried on each side, being lighted from the roof; and some idea of this monster structure can be formed, from the fact that it affords sufficient space for making several thousand yards of rope at the same time. Although this amazing quantity seems incredible, the superiority of their goods has caused so great a demand, that they have laid down some very powerful machinery (driven by steam power) on a gigantic scale, and upon a new principle, to expedite the supply of this useful product of manufacture, and thus introduced steam machinery, for the manufacture of ropes, twines, &c., for the *first* time in the Midland Counties. The whole of this machinery has been constructed under the personal superintendence of George Fowler, Esq., who had the distinguished honour of being presented with a valuable gold repeater by the Emperor of Russia, in testimony of his Majesty's approval of his inventions in rope machinery.

This eminent firm has recently patented an invention that is likely to prove invaluable where ropes are used. The invention consists of a combination of hemp and wire,

the latter being very ingeniously spun with the hempen thread, without receiving any portion of the twist; the ropes are thus rendered vastly superior, both as regards strength and durability, and it is confidently anticipated that for mining purposes, where human life is dependent upon the rope, it will be an incalculable boon, and avert those fearful catastrophes which are now of such frequent occurrence.

Independently of the works in Dartmouth Street, they have several large concerns, and employ hundreds of prisoners in the different gaols in the kingdom; and the active spirit and indefatigable zeal, signs of which are everywhere seen in their establishments, promise still further improvements, still greater success to themselves, and will reflect in time additional credit upon the town.

Such is but a meagre description of the manufactories of Birmingham as they at present exist. To give an adequate idea of their extent and variety would fill volumes, and even then a personal inspection would be necessary in order to complete the conception. My design has been merely to give a passing notice, among other things, of the industrial importance of the place; but even with this view my task has grown upon me to a degree which has absolutely compelled me to exceed the limits I originally proposed to myself; and now I find I could go on *ad infinitum*. I shall content myself, however, by a brief supplement of facts and illustrations, which appear to have a relation to my purpose, and the omission of which would render the description already given less useful and less satisfactory. Therefore, previous to quitting the subject, I shall submit to the reader a series of reflections upon the past and present condition of Birmingham, in connection with its manufactories, and I shall begin by introducing the following appropriate and compendious illustration of its important position as a manufac-

turing town, which I extract from the pages of a popular periodical called the "Leisure Hour:"—

"But what are the hundred thousand operatives of Birmingham, men and women, engaged in doing from one year's end to another? The answer to this question would puzzle 'the oldest inhabitant' of the town, and he might probably reply that it would be as difficult to say what they are not doing, inasmuch as the variety of industrial occupations here carried on is almost numberless, and new inventions or modifications of old ones are continually starting into existence. They make every thing, as one of their historians states, 'from a monster steam engine to a pin's head.' Every shape that iron and the mixed metals can be by any means induced to assume, they are summarily compelled to take at Birmingham or in the neighbourhood. Within a few miles of the town the materials of the Crystal Palace were brought into being, and round many a fair neck which bent eagerly towards the Sovereign at its opening, hung glittering chains of gold fabricated by feminine fingers in the town itself. An attempt at the mere enumeration of the articles fashioned in this central workshop would transform our pages into a dry catalogue of goods, along which the reader might wander till he was weary. Presuming, therefore, that such enumeration may be spared us, we shall desire the reader to divest himself and all that belongs to him, if he can only do it in imagination, of the products of Birmingham: he may by this means derive something like an adequate notion of what they are. Only suppose the thing done in an instant—*presto!* and every button has vanished from your attire, you have to hold your outer man together by force of arms; your hat-band is streaming in the wind for lack of a buckle, and flies off altogether as the hat sinks over your eyes; you feel especially loose and rickety about the heels, and in a moment are nearer the ground by half an inch, the heels of your boots having taken their farewell of the soles. The cold air blows into

your breast for the lack of the vanished shirt-buttons which kept it out. These sudden changes set you wondering what o'clock it is now, and you have recourse to your watch—but your watch is gone, or else it won't go, as the result of some hiatus in its machinery. Or supposing you to be sitting in your easy chair by your own fireside when the talismanic word is uttered—suddenly the said easy chair lets you comfortably down on your back, from the absence of the long screws which kept it together; the stove walks off with your fire and leaves your hearth cold; if you attempt to follow it you find yourself stumbling over loose boards, the flooring having started from the cross timbers, for want of the nails which kept it down: you cannot open the door of your room, for the handle is gone, but on making the attempt it tumbles down upon you for want of the hinges. One after another, every article of furniture in your dwelling is crumbling to pieces; the window curtains lie on the floor for lack of rods, and half the house is flying out at windows. There are no means left of kindling a fire or boiling the tea-kettle, and no tea-kettle to boil if there were. In short you find that you must bring back Birmingham again to help you out of your difficulties, and that there is no living without her. This is the plain fact, and one upon which the whole world are unanimously agreed; hence it is impossible, in one sense, to get out of Birmingham, go where we will. She meets us in the form of her multiplied manufactures in every corner of the globe; with her we ride the rail on the wings of steam, and sail the ocean to the far antipodes; she is present at our bed and board, be it in Old England or New Zealand, in the palace of the prince or the cabin of the emigrant; she surrounds us with the elements of comfort and convenience, and provides the materials of out-of-door labour and in-door enjoyments for unnumbered millions; she is in the truest sense the benefactress of universal man, from the crowned head to the savage of the wilderness; while she builds up her own greatness by administering to the wants of others."

The following, though not quite in place here, is, for its truthfulness, well worthy of insertion:—

“As might easily be predicated of a town whose products are in demand throughout the world, the social position of her operative classes, at least as evidenced by their gains, is far above the average. A Birmingham artizan in full employ realises more than double the income of the working man of Nottingham or Leicester. He lives in comfort if he chooses; at least he lives in a dry dwelling above ground, and is never found rotting piece-meal in damp cellars. If he be a reading man, and studiously inclined, he has the means of educating himself at his command, by the aid of public institutions open to his class. In winter he may employ the long leisure of his evenings in private study, or in attendance at rational recreations, which are open to meet his peculiar tastes and exigences; and in the summer he may get away from the smoky associations of the workshop and the forge, by a ramble among the green fields and villages.”

He *may*, it is true, do all this, but he may also be allured by attractions of another and counteracting tendency. And although the reading-room may be open to him, it must be remembered that the gin-palace is equally so, and that this hydra-monster will be far more potent in its attractive power, while it stands at every corner of the street—but of this more anon.

Independently of the trades already noticed, and which may be said to form the chief staples of the town, there are many others carried on with great success, which belonged originally to neighbouring towns, such as Walsall, Willenhall, and Wolverhampton; among these may be noticed the coach and saddlers' ironmongery, which has been for some years a trade of growing importance. Mr. Middlemore, Holloway Head; Messrs. W. and F. Room, Parade; Mr. James Insole, Hurst Street; and Messrs. John and Henry Lowe, Clarence Works, Fordrough Street, are, I believe, the oldest houses.

the latter firm obtained a prize medal in the Great Exhibition of 1851, for improved carriage lamps, and other articles. Lamps being useful as well as ornamental appendages to a carriage, have of late years been greatly improved, both in utility and appearance. The old-fashioned plain lamp is superseded by handsome unique designs, well adapted in shape and style to harmonize with the taste so well displayed by the English coach-builder, in the great variety of carriages now made. The glass generally used is best plate, about a quarter inch thick, upon which ingenious devices are sometimes tastefully engraved, while the ruby, amber, or blue colour is not unfrequently introduced, to produce a contrast, and give a pleasing effect. In the making of these lamps several processes are requisite. First, the body is formed out of best tin-plates, hammered and blocked into shape, and made strong by iron wire fixed round them and the parts requiring support. The glasses, previously bevilled on the edges, are separately encased with a metal beading, by which they are attached to the body. In fancy lamps the blank corner-pieces are put in, and the whole firmly soldered together. The lamp is then sand-papered all over, and placed in the japanner's hands. When well dried, the next operation is to line the inside with highly-burnished plated metal. The reflectors, nozels, and chimneys being spun up by a lathe into various patterns; afterwards the japanned parts are hand-polished in the ordinary way, and the lamp is finished by being rubbed up with soft leather. I have been over the extensive establishment of the Messrs. Lowe, and was greatly astonished at its comprehensive character. They are not only saddlers' ironmongers, but railway contractors, and manufacturers of the patent axles, and beading, brass and plated furniture for railway and other carriages; they make also harness furniture in all its branches. Messrs. W. and G. Ashford, Kent Street, have a similar establishment, but confined more to the whip-making, saddlery, harness, and portmanteaus. While Mr.

John Birtles, of New Street (late Bright and Martin), is celebrated principally for the exquisite make of his bridles; he showed me one that Prince Albert had actually *held in his hand*. I was pleased too with the different processes of whip-making submitted to my inspection; Mr. B. appears to have a large trade in this article. Mr. James Insole, of Hurst Street, combines the trade in coach and saddlers' ironmongery with that of bridle-cutter, saddler and harness-maker, so that the character of his establishment assimilates still more closely to that of Messrs. Lowe and Lowe.

Mr. William Dugard, Jun., of the Upper Priory, is the largest manufactuter of japanned, brass, covered, and plated coach and harness mountings, of every description; he is also a large maker of carriage, omnibus, and railway lamps, railway carriage fittings, and is a general railway fitting contractor, factor, and saddlers' ironmonger; he is the *only* maker in the kingdom of the elaborate new *glass-mounted* carriage lamps, with the improved handle for the candles, so much admired by all; these lamps are entirely fitted up with glass "of most elaborate workmanship," both inside and out; the reflectors and "mounts" are first made in flint glass; the flint glass is then cased, or "covered," *not stained*, with a glass of any colour; a design is then cut through the coloured glass to the flint glass, and in the centre there is a plain concave cut through the coloured glass for reflection; the glass then goes through the patent process of silvering the back, so that when the glass reflector is fixed in the lamp, the cutting through the coloured glass shows the silver reflector in the centre, and the designs round the reflector; it has a rich and most beautiful appearance. The advantages over the old plated metal reflector are many, more especially in its appearance and *reflective power*, as it never changes colour, either from heat or damp. The appearance of the lamp when complete is gorgeous, far surpassing anything else of the kind.

M. Dugard obtained a prize medal for carriage lamps, at the exhibition of 1851; he employs upwards of 200 pairs of hands. He is also making arrangements to commence manufacturing cart-gearing of every description, which has hitherto always been made in the neighbourhood of Walsall.

The light steel toy trade, about which Dr. Mackay filled six columns in the *Morning Chronicle*, in 1851, which might have been condensed into as many lines by a Birmingham man,—though no longer the trade it has been, is still represented in the town. Of the buckle I have already spoken. In the manufacture of fancy steel toys, such as light chains, guards, beads, &c., we are fairly beaten by the French; but the demand for them has increased, and we make now more than we did formerly. In some articles we cannot compete with the French with any hope of success; as, for instance, in the manufacture of small beads for purses, &c., which are imported from France, and sold here for about twopence halfpenny a great gross, but which we cannot make under five shillings and sixpence a great gross. In the production of steel watch-chains the French have also an advantage over us. I cannot account for their superiority. It is said that there are villages in France in which beads are manufactured and strung together by the young children in almost every house, and in this way they may be made cheaper than we can make them.

“A branch of the light steel toy manufacture,” says the correspondent of the *Morning Chronicle*, “which has of late years very much decreased, is that of steel snuffers; twelve or fifteen years ago there were many manufacturers in Birmingham who devoted themselves exclusively to this branch of trade. By the introduction of patent candles that require no snuffing, and by the more extensive use of camphine and oil lamps, as well as of gas, the trade has so greatly fallen off, that the whole of these manufacturers have been compelled to extend their business into other channels.” This statement,

or rather *mis*-statement, is sufficient to show the incompetency of a casual visitor, however talented in other respects, to do justice to a subject of a purely local character. No doubt Dr. Mackay had heard something about the comparative decrease in the trade of snuffers, and reasoning from analogies as a man of his unpractical mind would, he naturally concluded that the burning of lamps and gas would have the effect of extinguishing the snuffer trade. But how stands the fact? I happen to be intimately acquainted with only one of the snuffer-makers of the town, and he is now doing as much in this one article, *and no other*, as he has done for the last thirty years. He has made a fortune in it, and he believes his children may do the same. He informs me that he never solicits for an order, and that though he makes very little show, they come faster even now than he can get them up. Of course, then, I conclude that other and larger snuffer makers are still more inundated with orders, which completely falsifies the statement of Dr. M., who unfortunately has made many such representations on mere hearsay. I am aware that my description of the case has an air of improbability about it, which may at first prejudice the reader against it, for as far as our own country is concerned, there is no doubt that the general use of lamps and gas must have materially lessened the demand for snuffers, and there is no way of accounting for the continued and almost unprecedented trade in this article, except by taking a large view, and considering the subject in relation to other countries, and our own distant colonies. Here then the difficulty is at once met and overcome. My friend* tells me, that the very commonest articles

* The gentleman here alluded to is Mr. E. H. Bott, of George Street, brother to the artist of that name, and himself an admirer and patron of art, as the many pictures by which he has surrounded himself abundantly testify. But he is not only a lover of art, he is a just and honourable man in all his dealings, and possesses many estimable qualities, which they only who know him can appreciate; and these, unfortunately, can be but few. For many years Mr. B. has been labouring under a bodily affliction, which has almost confined him to his room;

have a readier sale than even superior goods, which proves at once that they find their way to a foreign and eager market.

In the heavy steel toys, Messrs. R. Timmins and Sons, Pershore Street, are among the most extensive manufacturers. The iron hinge trade, which originally belonged to the iron districts, is now included among the staples of Birmingham. This is owing to the adoption of machinery in the manufacture of this article, by which it has gained a preference over those made by the forge. Messrs. Paul Moore and Co., of the Great Lister Street Works, had the honour of receiving the Prize Medal awarded by the Royal Commissioners of the Great Exhibition of all Nations, for their patent wrought-iron and brass hinges. Mr. Moore informed me that he had great difficulty to convince the public that his article was as useful and as cheap as that originally made. Such is the variety of hinges made by his process, that he produces more than 400 kinds, adapted to different countries, according to their national tastes. The patent hinge is much neater in appearance, more durable, and less in cost than the forged article, consequently it maintains the preference, and many tons are made weekly in Birmingham. Mr. Gould, of Lionel Street, has some wonderful machinery for the production of this article, and the Messrs. Thornton, of Bradford Street, are also large producers of it. The metal wire trade is one of considerable importance in Birmingham, and one in which Messrs. Paul

notwithstanding which he has attended to his business with a regularity which accounts for his success, and would do honour even to those in command of the powers of locomotion. He has a most efficient right hand—in his wife—who is devoted and assiduous, not only in the delicate attentions which his position demands, but also in the sterner duties connected with his business. I do not mean to say that she is a "*woman of business*," *par excellence*, which is one of those odious excrescences growing out of our social system, and which to me is as hateful as a "Blue-stocking," but she takes that kind interest in the price and quality of goods which her relation to an infirm husband not only excuses but renders graceful; and in doing this she never steps out of the softness of her sex. Her nature is that of a kind-hearted woman, which trade cannot harden, nor snuffers extinguish.

Moore and Co., are also largely engaged, particularly brass wire.

Mr. John Cornforth, of Berkeley Street, is an extensive producer of iron and steel wire, now used for telegraph purposes. He succeeded to the business of the late Mr. Francis Clark. Ten years ago, an order for 50 tons of this article would be considered large, now 500 or 1000 tons are often named.

Another great staple article of Birmingham manufacture is brass wire locomotive tubes. The gentleman before alluded to undertook, some years ago, to produce a soldered copper tube for a condenser; it *failed* in practice in salt water, through a galvanic action, the joint being of metal containing a great proportion of zinc. This gave rise to a solid copper tube being made. He offered the means and a premium for the invention of a coppered tube without being soldered. He then entered a caveat for the invention, in the name of a Mr. C. Green, who undertook to put it in practice. The said tube was patented, a considerable fortune was made during the term of fourteen years by the patentees, and it is still in progress under Messrs. Alston and Green.

It may not be uninteresting to notice some few facts connected with the history of the staple manufactories of the town, which have been communicated to me by gentlemen whose position is a sufficient warrant for their authenticity. Mr. R. W. Winfield, the present proprietor of the Cambridge Street Works, employing persons in number sufficient to form a community of themselves, was an apprentice to the late Mr. Benjamin Cooke, who first introduced gas into Birmingham, and was thus the unwitting means of insuring a large trade to his then apprentice, in gas-fittings. I have already mentioned some singular facts connected with the rise and progress of the steel pen trade. How could any one have supposed that the circumstance of an obscure individual of the name of John Edwards, a Welshman, showing a metal pen to Mr. Hobday,

a snuffer-maker, would have led to the establishment of one of our largest staples as a commercial town! This pen I believe was sold to Messrs. Lawrence and Co., silver pencil-case makers, Bread Street, as a curiosity; and who would have thought that this latter trade at that time would have become what it now has, under Messrs. Parker and Acott, Brearley Street. as described by Miss Martineau, in Dickens's "Household Words"? And last but not least is the gun trade, which I have already introduced in its place, though some particulars are still wanting. It would seem from some facts which I am about to lay before the reader, that in the vicissitudes of this trade, it reached its climax about the year 1800, and that was the period from which Birmingham dates its first great prosperity.* I am informed that then the town had its localities for various branches of manufacture, and that when corn-fields and pleached hedges were so near the centre of the town as Ann Street, where the Free Church now stands, a considerable number of people were employed in producing guns, pistols, swords, pikes, &c. It was the most important branch of trade that occupied the locality from Weaman Street to the Tower, near Walmer Lane Bridge, where the town at that date appeared to end; and where now stands a large mill for making gun-barrels, (Mr. Clive's,) then stood a farm-house, and large out-buildings, and none other was visible in that direction, as far as the eye could reach. During the wars which then prevailed, no other branch of manufacture seemed to flourish, in comparison with what we have seen since. The largest houses did not employ more than sixty pairs of hands, and they were not occupied more than two-thirds of their time, owing to the sudden changes incident to continuous wars. Mr. Stephen Hill, of Pritchett Street, the oldest Ordnance contractor in Birmingham, has given me the following account of the number of bayonets made per

* For this information I am also indebted to Mr. P. Moore.

month in Birmingham, Wednesbury, and Westbromwich, in 1812 :—

Messrs. Wheeler and Sons, Snow Hill . .	10,000
Hill	6,000
Hadley	5,000
Woolley and Deakin	5,000
Osburn and Gunby	5,000
J. and C. Oughton	3,500
Chambers, Camp Hill	3,500
John Salter, Westbromwich	5,000
G. Salter, ditto	3,000
W. and John Rock, Wednesbury . . .	7,500
Total per month . .	<u>53,500</u>

This is independent of orders for carbines, &c., as well as those from the East India Company; and when I state that these orders have now nearly ceased altogether (at least with Mr. H.), it will give an idea of the comparative depression in this branch of our manufactories. Mr. Hill has taken advantage of the “tide in the affairs of men,” and, though he had never more than a limited education, he has written a history of his life, parts of which he read to me, and when I heard that at the time he was a young man (in 1800), bread was 1s. 10d. the quartern loaf, and bacon was 1s. 5d. per lb., and that he saved money out of 20s. per week, which he never exceeded up to the time of his reaching thirty years of age—I could not help being reminded of the resemblance of his early struggles to those of the venerable Hutton, and it is consolatory to know that similar and well-merited success awaited the arduous career of each.

In a pamphlet published by Drake, of New Street, in 1829, “On the Manufacture of Fire Arms,”* I find the following observations on the subject of proving: —“It will hardly be

* This pamphlet was kindly lent to me by Mr. William Jackson, of Bloomsbury, an old and respectable gun-maker of the town.

believed in the present day, that fire-arms were made in Birmingham previous to the establishment of the proof-house, the barrels of which neither underwent, nor were intended to undergo, any process whatever; that immense numbers of guns were made, with the knowledge and certainty, that if they were fired out of, they were sure to burst in the discharge. These guns were made for one market,—that of the coast of Africa, and called *slave guns*, and were made the article of barter for human flesh." This account makes one blush for the honesty and humanity of some of our fathers.

I extract the following passages from Mr. W. Greener's able work on "The Science of Gunnery," which I would recommend all to consult who are interested in the subject. " 'A fair field and no favour' has ever been our motto, and without egotism we can safely offer to make a gun or guns against any maker in the world, barring none. We claim not this ability exclusively; we can name several in Birmingham, who, if they have the price, will not be far behind, and have much pleasure in naming Moore and Harris, C. Allport, B. Woodward, in addition to the well-known Westley Richards." After proceeding to discuss the justice of the charge, that all the "rubbish" emanates from Birmingham, he concludes:—"We lament that this untoward feeling (jealousy) should exist, and more especially in Birmingham, where they possess all the elements for future prosperity, but which is blighted from the want of an expansive, liberal feeling toward each other, and by that 'millstone' round the neck of the trade, the present proof-houses."

Before leaving the subject of the gun trade, it will be well to notice the process of gun-barrel making, which I have just witnessed at the rolling mills of Mr. Ezra Millward, Mill Street, Aston Road; the whole mass of old iron, out of which the barrels are made, having been melted down, is subjected to the action of a steam tilt-hammer of great weight, until it is

welded into a tough mass ; in this stage it acquires a peculiar shape, and is afterwards rolled into bars, and cut into lengths sufficient for one barrel. This length is again heated, and passed between a pair of rollers, by which it is rounded, and its edge turned up ; it is again heated and welded, and once more pressed by smaller rollers till the cylinder is nearly completed. The mandril next comes into play, and by its powerful action completes the cylinder. The next operation is polishing, by which the rough inequalities of the inside are scraped off by a rod of iron ; the exterior is then ground by large Derby stones, and the barrel is complete. They are then (as before intimated), proved, and those barrels that have stood the proof are marked. The plan adopted by the Government Proof House, in Baggot Street, is, I believe, more ingenious. Mr. Millward tells me, that by the operation of the rolling mills, three men can do as much as fifteen men used to do, in gun-barrel making.

The iron fender trade is one that ought not to be overlooked, growing as it is in importance every day. It is sometimes distinct from the stove and grate trade, and boasts some highly respectable representatives ; among these are, Mr. George Gorton, 89, Lombard Street, who manufactures also the register stove grate, for which he received a Prize at the late Exhibition of all Nations, and bronze fenders ; Mr. J. Horton, Charles Henry Street ; and Mr. William Turner, Birchall Street, who makes all kinds of brass, steel, iron, wire, and kitchen fenders, as well as fire-irons ; he is also a wood screw manufacturer, as is Mr. Thos. Lowe, of Bordesley Street. In some articles of manufacture, the trade is confined almost to one or two houses, such as those of Mr. Joseph Redfern, Exeter Row, and Mr. W. H. Taylor, Vyse Street, in the spectacle trade ; and Messrs. Thornton & Sons, Bradford Street, in railway breaks. And again, the staple trades already noticed give rise to a variety of other branches, which of themselves would never have an existence, such as the paper-puffing for buttons, got up by

Mr. E. V. Blythe, Regent's Parade ; the patent gun-wadding, by Mr. James Baldwin, Newhall Street ; and the pen-holder making by Mr. E. D. Robinson, Baskerville Place, and others, all of whom of course are dependent upon the steel pen trade. But, as I have before remarked, independently of the hardware trades, there are a great variety of others ; such as the rope works, of Dartmouth Street ; the web and brace trade of Messrs. Carpenter, Temple Street, and Mr. J. Kean, George Street. Into these, of course, we cannot enter. Then, to come to something still softer, we have the Sherborne Street paper mills, of Messrs. Baldwin and Son ; and, last but not least, the immense printing establishment of Mr. M. Billing, Newhall Street, at which letter-press, lithographic, and copper-plate printing and engraving are carried on in all their branches—wood-engraving, stereotyping, and bookbinding being also executed on the premises. There are several houses in Birmingham that send out travellers in this line, but none have approached in extent or perfection this establishment : in fact, I doubt if there is any house comparable with it in the kingdom, as it is the only one in which the whole of the operations in the various branches mentioned are performed on the same premises, which is of course a most valuable advantage. It is only lately that I have been able to comprehend the immense power at command in this establishment, though I have frequently had occasion to visit it on business. There are five large printing machines, made by Cowper, of Manchester, worked by two steam-engines, by three of which 1500 double impressions can be taken in an hour at each machine, both sides of the paper being printed at once. Nearly 200 pairs of hands are employed on the premises, and about twenty letter-presses and forty lithographic presses are constantly at work. In consequence of increasing business, Mr. Billing is about to erect suitable premises opposite the Great Western Railway Station, in Livery Street. The contemplated alterations, when completed, will render the new establishment altogether unique,

as it will be arranged so as to facilitate the labour of the various workpeople in every possible way, in which respect it will be superior to any other similar erection ; it will also be highly advantageous to the persons engaged in the business, and will consequently give Mr. Billing increased advantages over other houses in the same line.

NOTE XV.

And poor mechanics need not ask for bread.

The exploded doctrine that machinery is inimical to the interests of the working man is scarcely worthy, at this time of day, of a moment's consideration. I cannot forbear, however, extracting one or two observations from the excellent chapter of the French philosopher, M. Arago, on the subject, which is deservedly considered conclusive upon the point:—"By diminishing manual labour, machinery admits of manufactures being carried on at a cheaper rate ; the effect of this reduction in price is an increase in the demand ; so great is the increase, and so anxious is our desire of comfort, that, notwithstanding the most incredible diminution in prices, the market value of the whole amount of goods manufactured annually, exceeds what it was before the improvement of the mode of manufacture ; the number of workmen employed in each species of manufacture, *increases* with the introduction of more expeditious methods."

The following passages, taken from Mr. Ward's Introduction to his "World in its Workshops," are still better:—"What is a Machine? A contrivance by man to increase his power over matter. If the power of man, then, to subdue matter be a good, which we presume no one will deny, the increase of that power must be a greater good, and its ultimate perfection the greatest of all goods. The mind may conceive, as it frequently does, the grandest projects for human improvement, but the hand alone cannot execute them. There have been thousands of instances of this kind, which the world has never known, and which must have died away in the brain

that conceived them. One of the great causes, if not the principal, of man's advancing so slowly in the path of amelioration, has been the incapacity of his hand to execute the conceptions of his head; it follows, therefore, that the nearer the power of the hand approximates to that of the head, the more rapid will be his advance.

"Man is the creature of machinery in a civilized state; deprive him of it, and he instantly becomes helpless and unprotected. Man himself is a magnificent machine, and God, his Creator, exclaims the pious and eloquent Barrow, is the first of *mechanicians*. Look at the form of man, either in repose or in activity, and you cannot but admire its beauty. What a majestic pile is that bony construction! how ingeniously devised and how exquisitely formed! how true in principle and how admirable in practice!

" 'Man, know thyself,' says the Scriptures, which may be interpreted, without the slightest irreverence, 'Contemplate thine own frame, examine its construction, and imitate its perfection in thy works!' The nearer man, therefore, approaches to the perfection of his own frame in his mechanical contrivance, the nearer he approaches to divine wisdom. And, without violating the implicit reverence which is due to the Creator, may we not imagine some superior spirit whispering in the ear of the earth's first-born, 'Man, make a machine, and your condition shall be improved; and the more perfect you get in machinery, the happier, the better, your state of existence; and the only possible way to obtain absolute dominion of the earth is by mechanical perfection.' There is one thing, however, very clear—that man has partially emancipated himself from his material slavery by his mechanical inventions; and when the spade first assisted the power of hand, and the plough first followed the direction of his head, the beginning of his emancipation must practically have commenced."

NOTE XVI.

The womb of earth,
Nursed then th' elements which form the worth,
The glory of man's greatness.

Let us mark to how small a coal-field central England has for so many years owed its flourishing trade. Its area, as I have already had occasion to remark, scarcely equals that of one of our larger Scottish lakes ; and yet how many thousand steam-engines has it set in motion ; how many railway trains has it propelled across the country ; how many thousand waggon-loads of salt has it elaborated from the brine ; how many million tons of iron has it furnished, raised to the surface, smelted, and hammered ! It has made Birmingham a great city, the first iron depot of Europe ; and filled the country towns and busy villages.—
H. Miller's First Impressions of England and its People.

NOTE XVII.

● Then young St. Martin's reared her tapering head.

Bissell thus alludes to St. Martin's :—

“ Now, more beneath your eye, see to your right
St. Martin's beauteous spire attracts the sight ;
Those trees that wave below, by yonder moat,
The ancient manor of our Lords denote ;
The streamlet which beyond you now may see,
For we've no river else—is called the Rea.”

We may as well extend the picture :—

“ Next, Ashted view—the Chapel plainly seen,
The Barracks for the troops,—lie just between :
Bartholomew's you'll see about due east ;
Small Heath extends beyond—two miles at least.”

While I am extracting from this ancient rhymester, I cannot resist the temptation of the following lines, to whose truth, I am sure, many will be feelingly alive, even in our day,—Suffolk Street to wit :—

"The streets are pav'd, 'tis true, but all the stones
Are set the wrong way up, in shape of cones ;
And strangers limp along the best pav'd street,
As if parch'd peas were strew'd beneath their feet."

NOTE XVIII.

When Rupert's fire extended to Dale End.

In the appendix to Ragg's Poem of "Edgbaston," I find the following account given of Prince Rupert's attack upon Birmingham. It is taken from a pamphlet entitled "A True Relation of Prince Rupert's Barbarous Cruelty against the Town of Birmingham, which took place on Monday, April 3, 1643, &c., &c., &c. London: printed by John Wright in the Old Baily, April 12, 1643."

"Sir,

"Being by promise ingaged unto you, I am now to make relation of a most barbarous massacree of our townesmen of *Bermingham*, and of the enraged cruelty of Prince Rupert and his inhumane Cavaliers: Sir, thus it was, about three of the clocke one Munday in the afternoone, he had with neere two thousand horse and foote, four Drakes and two Sakers, set against the towne, playing with his ordnance, and endeavouring to force his way, with foote and horse, were twice beaten off with our musqueteers at the entrance of *Derrington*, at which many of their men fell, the townesmen held them in play above an houre, we had not above one hundred and fortie musquets and having many entrances into the towne they were many too few, *Coventry* men had withdrawne their forces three daies before, all but Captaine Castle-downes Dragooneers, a Troope of horse of Master *Perkes*, commanded by Captaine *Greaves*, being in the Towne, not fit for that service, made escape when the adversaries began to incompasse the Towne, and force the waies over the meadows, and fired the Towne in two places, and so by incompassing them that did defend the out worke, caused them to draw inward, to other workes there in Digbeth, which worke they defended to the adversaries losse. but being the enemy brake in at the Millone they were forced to leave that worke also, and so put to shift for themselves, with breaking through houses, over garden waies, escaped over hedges and boggy meadows, and hiding their armes, saved most of them, the enemy killed none, as I heare, in fight, unless some three or foure, Mr. *Carter*, and Samuell *Elsmore*, being of them, some with their armes defended themselves stoutly till death, they pursued the rest in fields and lanes, cutting and mangling naked men to the number of fiftene men, one woman, another being shot, and many hurt, many men sore wounded, and Mr. *Tillan* the surgeon standing in his dore to entertain them, was most cruelly shot, having his leg and thigh bones broken,

they pillaged the Towne generally, their owne friends sped worst, an one tuesday morning set fire in divers places of the Towne, and have burnt neere a hundred dwellings the Welch end, Dale end, and More street end, Humphrey *Rans*, the Bell, and divers houses thereabout, many other fires they kindled, but they did not burne, they left kindled matches with gunpowder, also in other places, intending nothing less than utterly to destroy the Towne, but by God's Providence they whose hurt they chiefly intended by God's hand is much prevented : the Cavaliers lye about *Clanke* beyond *Wosall*, are joyned with *Hastings* forces, and intend to set on the Close at *Lichfield*, where I feare not but they will have enough ; your Fathers house stands, but hath lost much, Mr. *Roberts*, Mr. *Porters*, and mine be safe, but are threatened to be pulled downe, and they pretend Prince *Rupert's* warrant, but however its their envy to God's overruling providence turned the mischief so much on the heads of those that might with their timely helpe have prevented this mischiefe ; I am much grieved at the losse of your brother, and many other friends, three being my honest workmen, whose lives I would I had redeemed with mine estate. The Cavaliers have lost thirty men at least, of which there be three or four chiefe men Earles and Lords, I beleeve you have heard them named, the Earl of *Denby*, the Lord John *Stewart*, some say the Lord *Digby*, thirty are said to be buried, and many carried away wounded, this did so much enrage them, that they appeared more like Devils than men, lamenting more their losse, then boasting of their gaine, which was much in goods and in money, its thought above two thousand pound, thirteene hundred being taken from Mr. *Peake*, Mr. *Jennens* lost much, the which men if they had parted with little before, our fortification had bene such as they could not have entered, which went on well for the time. So wishing you have to comfort in our God, who is able to turn the rage of men to his praise, and sweeten this bitter cu by some other comfort, I conclude and rest,

"Yours to command,

"R. G."

NOTE XIX.

And finds that peace which we denied him here.

The following particulars in connection with this eventful period, which I have extracted from the notes in a "Life of Hutton," kindly lent to me by Mr. Peter Hollins, will be read with interest.

"We have received from a lady of Clifton, who possesses the curious original, a copy of the receipt Dr. Priestley gave to the Commissioners."

"£3098 0s. 6d."

"Received of Mr. Thomas Lee, the sum of three thousand and ninety-eight pounds and sixpence, being the sum he, as Attorney for me,

received of William Little, Esquire, Treasurer to the Commissioners for putting in execution the act for more easy raising the Damages incurred on account of the late riots, within the Hemlingford hundred ; being the sum of two thousand nine hundred and ninety-two pounds and ten shillings, for damages and costs recovered by me against the said hundred, for injuries done by rioters to my property, in the month of July, 1791, and also one hundred and one pounds ten shillings and sixpence, for interest due thereon.

“JOSEPH PRIESTLEY.”

Doctor Priestley's losses were in part made up by the liberality of his friends and the lovers of science ; but the destruction of his manuscripts, and the loss of that peace of mind, and of that confidence in his fellow countrymen, without which there is no happiness for a patriotic mind, could never be made up. To his friend William Hutton, who had to bear all his losses on his own shoulders, Priestley, from his new sojourn at Clapton, near Hackney, wrote the following characteristic letter :—

“July 7, 1792.

“Dear Sir,

“I thank you for the great pleasure I have had in reading your excellent *Account* of the Riots in Birmingham : though written while the dismal scene in which you were so great and undeserved a sufferer was recent, you preserve the same cheerful and benevolent spirit that distinguishes everything you have written, and even that pleasant humour that always delights me in your works. I think it cannot fail to do good, with those who are capable of reading with candour, and some I hope there are of that class in all places, in Birmingham itself not excepted. You will, however, excuse a few remarks :—First, you are too complimentary to myself :—Second, you are candid I think to an excess, and seem to consider all religions as alike, which will make many persons imagine you are an unbeliever. Two opposite systems cannot be true ; and whatever any man deems to be important truths, he must wish others would embrace. Hence you should not condemn the spirit of proselytism : you cannot, indeed, do it without condemning the conduct of Apostles and Reformers in all ages. If you think there is anything worth your notice in these remarks, you will shorten one part of your work, which I think will bear it. I often speak of your case as the hardest of any of the sufferers. There was an ostensible and plausible reason for attacking me ; but you had done nothing amiss. Every trial, however, in which we behave as we ought, will be of use both to ourselves and others. By the help of my friends, I have once more furnished my laboratory, and am beginning to work

again. If it be a second time demolished, I shall not make a third attempt. With my best respects to your son and daughter.

"I am, dear Sir,

"Yours sincerely,

"J. PRIESTLEY."

There are two or three things in this letter which seem to call for observation, not only because the writer was an eminent philosopher, but because it may be worth while to show the different aspect in which the opinions of even a great man may be viewed, from the present distance of time. The learned Doctor tells the venerable Antiquarian that he is "candid to an excess," in seeming to consider "all religions alike, which will make many persons imagine you are an unbeliever." So that, according to the Doctor, the more a man's heart overruns with charity toward his neighbour, irrespective of his religion, the less he is to be thought a "believer;" and the more bigoted his preference for one sect, to the exclusion and contempt of all others, the more valid his claim to the title of a believer. Then may I be an unbeliever with the venerable Hutton! At the risk of being amenable to the charge of prolixity, I will give some of the words of Mr. Hutton, breathing that liberality of sentiment so offensive to the Doctor. It would seem that at the period alluded to, which was soon after the French Revolution of 1791, religious rancour and sectarian animosity were at their height; dissension and discussion were the order of the day, and Dr. P., with more zeal perhaps than discretion, had plunged into the vortex of angry disputation. It is to this fact that Mr. H. alludes in the following words:—

"It is surprising that men of a liberal education should persevere in the ancient mode of quarrelling for religion. She nowhere authorises it. The Christian religion teaches meekness. Every thing which differs from this rule is unchristian. A man possessed of the least reflection, well knows it is impossible to bring the human race into one

mind ; neither is it worth the trial. Disputes, instead of converting the man to my sentiments, tend to confirm him in his own. They may widen a breach, but never close one. Besides, it has never yet been determined what true religion is : it has varied in all ages ; what was right to-day, was wrong to-morrow. Synods and Councils have been doing and undoing, from the edicts of Constantine down to the convocations of the clergy."

Nothing can be more true, more philosophical, or less offensive to a right-minded christian than the above paragraph, and yet it calls forth a friendly remonstrance from Dr. P., lest the writer should, by so expressing himself, be taken for "an unbeliever." It is evident to me, that great and distinguished as were the talents of Dr. Priestley as a votary of science, like other great men he had his weak points, and his irritability on the subject of religion was among them. And though his pretensions as a philosopher were far more brilliant than those of Mr. Hutton, the latter could take a more philosophical view of religion, and was therefore better qualified to give advice thereupon, though he does not presume to do it. He could understand, if the Doctor could not, that the spirit of proselytism, so rife in those times, was but the spirit of persecution, as little calculated to redound to the honour of religion as the bitter though able controversy then pending between Dr. P. and the Rev. Edward Burn, of St. Mary's, was to generate kindly and charitable sentiments in a christian community. If a man attempt to convert me to his religion, he *must* commence his task by presupposing that he is right and I am wrong, which is an insult to my understanding to begin with, so long as the subject is one of mere speculation, or, to use the words of Mr. Hutton, so long as it has "never been determined what true religion is." The Apostles of course were differently circumstanced. They had a mission to perform, and were supposed to receive their credentials from the

highest source of inspiration. But even they went forth in the spirit of charity to *make known* the "glad tidings," instead of sitting in judgment upon their fellow men. They did not persecute, but were rather persecuted, as all reformers have been, from Christ downwards, who have sought to establish a better system of ethics or purer modes of thought. But under the Christian dispensation it was not expected that we should quarrel about or even discuss mere points of doctrine, but that all men should unite to reduce the glorious precepts and fraternising principles of Christianity to practice.

I think the character of Hutton has scarcely had justice done to it; although he was not a man of great learning, I think he had more wisdom than many who could boast of a classical education, or eminent scientific acquirements. Some of his decisions in the Court of Requests are worthy of Solon. And there are, even in his gossiping remarks about himself (for he was a great egotist), so profusely scattered throughout his writings, many homely-expressed sentiments which nevertheless contain the pure ore of truth and wisdom. The following is one which occurs after an account of his recovery from a dangerous illness:—"This taught me a lesson I could not have believed. The nearer the grave, the less the terror. Health is the season to dread death, not sickness. The world had lost every charm, and futurity every fear." Now let any casuist or Doctor of Divinity dare to gainsay this. And yet the terrors of the death-bed make up half the stock-in-trade of our well-fed parsons. The truth is, that no man in his senses *can* feel any anxiety in his dying moments, unless it is in reference to the condition of his family. That is a natural instinct; all else is opposed to nature, and therefore untrue; and our cunning Doctors know it as well as the honest old man above alluded to. While speaking on the subject of the venerable historian, I feel bound to notice a charge brought against

him by the Rev. J. A. James, of Carr's Lane, in his History of "Nonconformity in Birmingham." He says of Mr. H., after noticing some facts of his life:—"He was cold, hard, and somewhat penurious. As he acquired, in his way, considerable notoriety, and belonged to the congregation in Carr's Lane, this brief notice of him will not be out of place." This passage ought to read as follows:—"He (Mr. Hutton) was a cold-blooded, hard-hearted, and money-minded fellow. *But*, as he belonged to *our* congregation, and has become rather popular, we will just notice him, if it is only to give him a kick." Now this appears to me to be committing "a fault against the dead," and therefore I shall endeavour to rescue the character of a man to whom assuredly we are all much indebted, from the unmerited odium thus cast upon it. I have already paid my tribute of respect to the character of Mr. James, but I cannot allow him to misrepresent one for whose memory, if anything, I have a still greater veneration. Even if his severe description of the man had been the correct one, it comes with a bad grace from that pen which has written so much about the unchristian dealings of men towards each other. In reference to the charge of coldness, I cannot imagine that a man who could write of his wife, as he (Mr. H.) does, in the following words, could be of a very cold nature:—"Three months before her death, when she was so afflicted with an asthma that she could neither walk, stand, sit, nor lie; but, while on a chair, I was obliged to support her head, I told her that she had never approached me without diffusing a ray of pleasure over my mind; she replied, 'I can say more than that,—you never appeared in my sight, even *in anger*, without that sight giving me pleasure.' I received the dear remark, as I now write it, with tears." A man who could write in this way, might be ridiculed by a "*cold*" world, as a *fond*, weak old man; but I think it is too bad that his memory should be insulted, by applying such "*cold*" and "*hard*" epithets. I could give many instances of his kindheartedness, and of the

love he inspired among the poor by his affectionate conduct towards them, when filling the office of overseer of the parish. And if he were "penurious" at all, it was from his desire to benefit his "dear" children, which I dare say he thought more of than of Carr's Lane Chapel. But even his friend Dr. Priestley, in the above letter, applauds the "cheerful and benevolent spirit" which pervaded all his writings; and surely he is as high an authority as Mr. James, and would be likely to know the man of whom he was speaking much better. I believe myself that the town of Birmingham is under greater obligations to Mr. Hutton than to any writer she has produced, and therefore I'm sure I shall be excused for paying this passing tribute to his memory. It is true his works are not so *finely* written as those of some other authors, but, notwithstanding that drawback, there is a sterling quality about them which has already insured them a long life; and, with all due respect to Mr. J., I have no doubt that the "History of Birmingham" will continue to be read as long as the "History" of its "Nonconformity." I shall conclude this somewhat copious note by the following beautiful tribute to Priestley, from the eloquent pen of Robert Hall. "The religious tenets of Dr. Priestley appear to me erroneous in the extreme; but I should be sorry to suffer any difference of sentiment to diminish my sensibility to virtue, or my admiration of genius. His enlightened and active mind, his unwearied assiduity, the extent of his researches, the light he has poured into almost every department of science, will be the admiration of that period when the greater part of those who were favoured, and those who have opposed him, will be alike forgotten. Distinguished merit will ever rise superior to oppression, and will draw lustre from reproach. The vapours which gather round the rising sun, and follow it in its course, seldom fail at the close of it to form a magnificent theatre for its reception, and to invest with variegated tints, and a sublime effulgence, the luminary which they cannot hide."

NOTE XX.

And only left her memory hovering there.

The lady here alluded to was the late Miss Heaton, afterwards Mrs. Salt, who, at the time referred to, must have been about sixteen years of age, and the author not more than eight. It was the first time his boyish heart was ever stirred to the mystic charms of music and of love; and even some years after, the same (to him) angelic form continued to haunt his youthful fancy, to mingle in his dreams, and be at once the theme and inspiration of his hopes. It was, of course, a very romantic passion, only fit to be noticed in a poetical effusion, which passed off with the enthusiasm of youth, and which the lady was never destined to be made cognizant of. The last time the author saw her, was on the occasion of the first Triennial Musical Festival, held in the Town Hall, when she appeared to have lost those ethereal charms with which a somewhat poetic brain had invested her, and to be fast approaching the *en bon point* of middle age. She married Mr. T. C. Salt, and has been dead some years, leaving two or three children, now grown up.

NOTE XXI.

The spot where once an armed force was seen.

Since called **CAMP HILL**, where, it is recorded, Prince Rupert, in 1643, encamped, previous to his making an attack upon the town, at that time filled with "Parliament men," and determined in its hostility to the Prince, as well as to the King his master. The vestiges of a camp occupied by the Parliament forces may be seen by the angle formed by the Stratford and Warwick roads on Camp Hill. Prince Rupert fired the town, and William Fielding, Earl of Denbigh, lost his life here, by a random shot from an officer whom he was pursuing.

What is now called "Garrison Lane," also took its name from that period.

It may be interesting to some persons to know that about five miles south of Birmingham, and five furlongs from Solihull Lodge, on an eminence, is a Danish camp, containing about nine acres, nearly triangular, the ditch twenty feet wide, having only one entrance. Upon King's Wood, five miles from Birmingham, and two hundred yards east of the Alcester Road, runs Mortimer's Bank, near a mile in length, thrown up by the famous Earl of that name, in the reign of Edward II., to enclose the wood. The parishes of King's Norton, Solihull, and Yardley, threw it down, and murdered the Earl's bailiff, for which the Earl recovered £300 against them, but did not live to receive it.

PART II.

NOTE XXII.

The Free School stands conspicuous to the sight.

The following description of the "Guild of the Holy Cross," which formerly occupied the site of the Free Grammar School, will be thought curious:—

"This hill was situate in New Street, on the place where the Free School now stands. It was founded in the time of Richard II. Thomas de Sheldon, John Coleshill, John Goldsmyth, and William Stow, obtained a license from that Prince, in the sixth year of his reign, to grant lands of twenty marks per annum value, lying in Birmingham and Edgbaston, for the maintenance of two Priests, to celebrate divine service to the honour of God, our Blessed Lady his Mother, the Holy Cross, St. Thomas the Martyr, and St. Catherine, in the Church of St. Martin, here at Birmingham. Within ten years afterwards, the inhabitants of this town, by the name of the bailiffs and commonalty, procured a patent from the same king, to found a Guild or perpetual fraternity amongst themselves, to the honour of the Holy Cross, consisting not only of men and women of Birmingham, but other adjacent places, and to constitute a master and certain wardens thereof; as also to erect a chantry of Priests to celebrate divine service in

the said church, for the souls of the founders, and all the fraternity; for whose support, and of all other charges incumbent, there were eighteen messuages, three lofts, six acres of land, £40 rent, lying in the specified town of Birmingham and Edgbaston, then given thereto; the lands belonging to which Guild were, in the 37th of Henry the VIII., valued at £31 2s. 10d. out of which the three Priests that sung mass in the church here had £5 6s. 8d. each; an organist at £1 13s. 4d.; the common midwife, 4s.; and the bellman, 6s. 8d. per year, with several others of less consequence.

“Which said lands, at the request of the inhabitants in the 5th of Edward the VI., were assigned by the king unto William Symmons, gent., Richard Smallbrook, then bailiffs of the town, John Shelton, Richard Swift, William Colmore the elder, Thomas Marshall, Henry Foxall, John Veysey, William Boyce, John King, Thomas Cooper, John Willes, William Paynton, John Ellyatt, William Aschrig, Thomas Smith, Robert Rastall, William Colmore the younger, Thomas Snowdon, and William Mitchell, inhabitants of this place, and their successors, to be chosen in upon the death or departure out of the town of any of the before-recited persons, for the support and maintenance of a Free Grammar School within Birmingham, to be called the Free Grammar School of King Edward the VI., for the education and instruction of children in grammar for ever, with one schoolmaster and usher under, extending to the value of £20 per year; whereby the said letters patent to continue unto the persons above specified, and their successors, to be held of the king and his successors, as of his Castle of Kenilworth, in free and common soccage, paying 20s. yearly into a court of augmentation, at the Feast of St. Michael, for all demands and services whatever.”

The endowment arising from land at that time produced only £30 per annum, but now, from being let on building leases, produces nearly £10,000 per annum, which on the expiration of leases is still increasing. The management is

still vested in a bailiff and eighteen governors, who appoint a head master, second master, and usher, with a writing and drawing master. A new and suitable edifice was erected in 1834, by the governors of this wealthy establishment, on the old site, at an expense of £50,000. The design was furnished by Mr. C. Barry, of London, and presents a mixed style of Gothic architecture, characterized by new but beautiful and appropriate combinations. The external form of the structure is quadrangular, and extends 174 ft. in front, and 125 ft. in flank; the internal arrangements embrace two courts similar in form, around and between which the different sections of the building rise; the wings of the front and flanking buildings form elegant mansions for the head and second masters. Besides a fixed salary of £400 a year, the head master derives additional emoluments, in proportion to the number of boys in the school, by a capitation fee on each boy, which, calculating the number of boys at 400, will make the salary £1000 a year. The governors have recently obtained an act to enable them to appoint masters to teach mathematics, modern languages, and the arts and sciences, in the Grammar School. The head master is also entitled to receive eighteen boarders, and the second master twelve. The annual visitation of the school is held, at which three resident members of the Universities attend and examine the boys, and report upon the state of the school to the governors. There are ten exhibitions of £50 a year each, for four years, attached to the school; they are open to any college, and are given by the governors to the boys who are declared by the examiners to be highest in classical attainments. Five elementary schools on this foundation are under the inspection of the head master, the Rev. E. H. Gifford, M.A., viz.:—a branch in Gem Street, a neat building erected in 1838, to accommodate 135 boys, and 130 girls; a branch in Meriden Street, erected also in 1838, to accommodate 240 boys; and a branch in Edward Street, for boys and girls, to accommodate 140 each, built also in 1838. These schools

are always fully attended, and by the report published, 1847, 1200 children are returned for King Edward's School. A sum of £39,000 has been paid to the governors of the Grammar School, by the London and North Western Railway Company, for property required in Birmingham. The claim was for £42,000.

This noble institution, after having for many years lapsed into comparative uselessness as an educational establishment, is now the chief pride and ornament of the town. The many abuses which had crept in to disfigure its history have disappeared before the inquiring spirit of an enlightened age, and now it ranks among the best-conducted seminaries of the age. I can myself testify to the utter want of knowledge which characterized the *classical* masters of a former period, while I now congratulate the town on the superior (because more practical) quality of the education administered, as well as the excellent regulations in the mode of imparting it. Much of this improvement, I believe, is attributable to the zeal and energy of the late head master, the Rev. Prince Lee, now Bishop of Manchester, who was peculiarly qualified for the task, from his previous training under the late eminent Dr. Arnold, of Rugby. But notwithstanding its present success as an educational institution, I will venture to suggest that there is one error still retained in the method of instruction adopted in this, as well as other public schools, which must materially lessen the amount of good they might otherwise be calculated to confer. I allude to the practice of *cramping* each boy with the same lessons, as if he were a mere machine, with no idiosyncrasy of his own—on the principle that what is good for one is good for all. I am aware of the difficulties attached to any alteration of system established in large schools, more especially when the reform desiderated is one which demands on the part of its conductors a knowledge, not of mere routine in the classics, but of science, of human nature, and more particularly of phrenology, as a guide to the mental bent and capacities of

the pupil. As long as there are no two boys alike, it is simply absurd to apply the same discipline and expect the same results. It never has been the case, and never can be. Byron and Peel were at the same school together at Harrow, and sat on the same form. The scholastic regulations were admirably adapted to develop the mind of the embryo practical statesman. Not so with the poet; what was sport to his school-fellow, was death to him; and the *dunce* of a schoolmaster could not understand why a boy of his general ability could not *be up* in his lessons. He therefore held Peel up as an example, and tried (sapient mentor!) to *thrash* the other up to his standard. We know, however, if he had gone on thrashing till now he would not have made a Peel of Byron. Then why attempt to apply and perpetuate so erroneous a principle, and continue to inflict blind and cruel punishment upon our children? The time *must* come for a radical change in our present unwise system of education: the question is no longer now as to the *desirability* of educating the people, but only as to the manner of doing it. We have already improved upon the master of Harrow, and even those of our own time, for no one would be so insane now as to flog a boy for a fault which was not wilful. In fact, I am glad to perceive, the savage custom of inflicting corporeal punishment is rapidly disappearing altogether. We have been called by a great authority "the worst-educated nation in Europe"; and it is evident to me that our school teachers must first be taught the nature and responsibilities of their office, before we prove ourselves undeserving the "bad eminence" assigned to us. Much, however, is being done, and especially in our own town, to lessen the amount of reproach to which we have rendered ourselves obnoxious. The manufactories, as well as the churches and chapels, are beginning to vie with each other in their efforts to facilitate the progress of education. Men are everywhere alive to its importance; and though we have not yet arrived at unanimity in reference to the plans to be adopted, the

difficulties which opposed the establishment of a general system of instruction are by no means insurmountable. Ignorant prejudice and narrow-minded bigotry look now with less jealous eyes on the movements of that philanthropic band leagued together in the righteous cause of education. And the time may come when every child that is born shall be made a partaker, equally, in the light of knowledge, as in the air we breathe.

Some time ago, an effort was made to establish in this town the plan of the "Lancashire Public School Association;" but I fear this, like many other good things attempted *here*, has failed for lack either of zeal, of faith, or of funds. Something has been attempted, and also carried out, in the shape of female education, which is worthy of special observation, more particularly in Birmingham, where it is so essential to the moral well-being of the community. The following are some of Miss Martineau's remarks on the incipient character of this movement:—

"Four years and a half since, the first evening school for women was opened at Birmingham. It was planned and opened, and has been conducted, by ladies who did not lose time in arguing whether it is a good or a bad thing that women should be employed in manufactures, but offered means of improvement in mind and in ways to such as were so employed. They offered at once to teach reading, writing, arithmetic; sewing, including the cutting-out and mending of clothes; and to give instruction in the contents of the Bible, and of the other great book—the world we live in—as far as means would allow. They hoped, and still hope and intend, to teach the most important of the domestic arts of life—and first, cookery. In time, vocal music, and other softening and sweetening arts, may be attempted. Time will show that. Meanwhile time has shown that good has been done, which ought to be made known, for other reasons than the pleasure of it; that such things may be done elsewhere.

"It may be seen at a glance what an undertaking this was. Everybody may not know what factory women—some factory women at least—are. They are women, and not children, in the first place. The class contemplated had grown up in ignorance; they had not lived among home influences, but in the rough independence of factory life. Their prejudices were in proportion to their ignorance; and their pride was in proportion to their ignorance, prejudices, age, habits, and class jealousy, all together. Some who knew of the scheme prophesied that no woman would come; others, that they would be too disreputable to be kept in order, but by policemen: others, again, that it would be impossible to teach them, if they did come, and that there would be an incessant change of scholars. These prophecies were so many warnings to the ladies what to anticipate, and how to act. They would ask no questions about character, nor look to see who had wedding rings, and who had none. What they offered was knowledge; and every woman who came for knowledge should be welcome to it, as long as she pursued her object decently and quietly. They would admit no policeman, no man whatever, happen what might. They would stand or fall by their object of making this a woman's affair altogether. They would be careful, above everything, to treat every person within the walls with the respect due to womanhood, under any provocation whatever. They reminded each other of the vast difference, now to be first practically experienced, between the manners in which they had been reared and those which were habitual with their pupils; that offensive things would be said and done, which must pass unnoticed while there was a possibility of no offence being meant. It would be hard to understand and remember this sometimes; but it must be understood and remembered. As to whether the women would come for instruction, that was a thing to be ascertained by experiment, and not otherwise. The experiment was tried.

* * * * *

"Almost without means, they began one evening in September, 1847. A room was kindly lent them by a merchant.* The counter was their table, and for seats they had packing-cases, covered with meal-sacks. Much time must be lost at the beginning and end of each evening, from the necessity of putting away every thing, and leaving the room as they found it, for the daily use of the workmen. But to have any room at all was something. Thirty-six women appeared the first night, all unused to be taught, and the teachers were no more familiar with the sort of teaching they had undertaken to give. The first thing done was writing down their names, and their reasons for wishing to learn this and that. The eagerness to learn to write was the most remarkable indication that night; as, perhaps, it has remained since. One young woman undertook to give reasons for another's wish to learn. 'Hur wants to write to hur chap.' The 'chap' was gone 'to Australia;' how and why there was no occasion to inquire. There were plenty of reasons for others having the same wish; and there is something strange and very impressive, to this day, in the patience with which these women sit at their pot-hook making—sometimes in the knowledge of what they are undertaking, and sometimes in simple faith that they are going through a necessary process. One woman made Os in her copy-books for weeks; and then being set to join on an l, was delighted to find that she had made a d, and could write the first letter of her own name. Some are less humble; and there is more conceit about the reading than about writing. One woman complained that she was treated like a child, in having to learn o, x, ox, and in being asked what it meant; 'as if,' said she, 'everybody didn't know that a hox is a cow.' Owing to a curious local circumstance, writing is remarkably difficult to one class of the scholars—those who

* This was Mr. W. R. Lloyd, Newhall Street.

polish papier-mâché articles by hand. The palm must be kept perfectly smooth; and, in the act of constantly preserving it from contact with whatever would roughen it, the fingers become stiff, and of an unusual form, which, though favourable to the use of the needle, is much otherwise to that of the pen. Yet the learners stick to their writing, as if nothing could discourage them. * * * *

"It has required no little courage: prepared as they were for rude manners, the ladies did not know what accidents might happen; and certainly they did not dream of being left in the dark, with a set of noisy women. This happened, however, one evening early in the experiment. The men outside put out the gas, leaving only the glimmer of the fire within; and the scholars responded to the joke with loud and coarse mirth. The teachers kept their nerve: one went out to keep off the police; candles were procured; and soon, by firmness, good humour, and patience, quietness was restored. On one occasion, the young minister's wife,* who chiefly originated this school, climbed the counter, as the only way of making herself seen; clapped her hands to make herself heard, and gave a lesson on order and quietness. No such things are necessary now. These things are remembered only as difficulties long past. * * * *
In half-a-year there was more convenience, and a saving of time, by the kindness of the Messrs. Osler, who lent a room, furnished with benches and desk; and here the work went on till the room was wanted for the Crystal Fountain. The school-room belonging to a neighbouring chapel formed the place of meeting for some time after." †

The school is now continued, I believe, in commodious rooms lately erected for the purpose, at the back of the Church of the Saviour, in Edward Street.

* Mrs. George Dawson.

† Dickens' "Household Words."

NOTE XXIII.

And art shall reign, and artists flourish more.

The institution called, by courtesy, "the Society of Artists," is not in reality a Society of Artists. It has been for many years managed by a few engravers and drawing-masters, who, strictly speaking, have no more claim to the title of "artists" than a mere translator of Latin verse has to that of a poet. This fact, no doubt, accounts in some degree for the little progress the "society" has made, and for its comparatively low position even at the present moment. I do not mean to say that there are no real artists connected with the institution; on the contrary, I know several eminent ones who have been, at least nominally, associated with its history. But even they will agree that the intruders above mentioned have been too long identified with it (at least in the public eye) to consist with the permanent interests of the institution. There is, however, of course, a difficulty in removing them, as there ever must be where men fond of office, and of the "brief authority" it yields, have once got possession. Delicate and (occasionally) unequivocal hints as to the policy of their retiring have, I am informed, frequently been conveyed, but without effect. They cannot understand that the institution can even linger, as it has done so long, without them. So that, to reverse the old adage, there is positively no "hope" as long as there is "life." Age, with its infirmities, has already spoken its impressive lesson, but in vain. They still cling, with the tenacity of old affection, to the brief distinction of official importance, and the ephemeral prominence which it brings, however hollow and invalid their pretensions. So that the institution has no alternative but to wait patiently for that deliverance which time has long promised, and the termination which nature has ordained.

The "prize fund," which, I believe, originated with ~~an~~ totally unconnected with art, has given a sort of extraneous life to the society; but even that has failed, this year, to secure us an exhibition of paintings worth visiting twice. Last year, the mutterings of despair suggested the getting-up of a "Literary and Artistic Banquet," at twenty-five shillings a head, in order to benefit the funds. It was called "Literary" in compliment to Mr. Charles Dickens, the popular novelist, who was the principal guest on the occasion, and without whose presence it could not possibly have paid. I am not aware that there was any other literary man there, unless we allow the reporters of newspapers to come under that category. A friend of mine, who is an amateur of art, has attempted, in somewhat doggerel verse, to celebrate the event; and as I find it is already nearly forgotten, I may perhaps be excused for inserting the lines.

"Lines written in commemoration of a grand testimonial presented, and banquet given to Charles Dickens, Esq.; on which occasion some eminent Artists and Ministers of the Gospel were invited to meet him. The presentation took place at the Society of Artists, and the banquet at Dee's Royal Hotel, Temple Row, Birmingham.

"Let them talk as they will of the year fifty-one,
 With its grand Exhibition, 'now faded and gone;'
 More marvels are looming, all minds will agree,
 In the promising year, just commenced, fifty-three.
 At least, for old Brum, we may venture to say
 That its long-dawning glory will burst into day,
 For the very first month was begun with a feast
 Which ought to be reckoned an epoch at least.
 Such doings 'mong feeders and artists took place,
 That old Time from our annals will never efface,
 (Tho' some grumblers still murmur about the '*disgrace*.') *
 The idea was first started, they say, in a joke—
 Some wag at the artists his fun wish'd to poke;
 But all of a sudden they seiz'd on the thought,
 Like a hungry dog who a *tit-bit* has caught;
 And they nurs'd it and fondled it, each in his way,
 Lest the thing, all uncherished, should sink to decay;

* This, I opine, must have reference to the fact of the testimonial having originated at a tavern in Gt. Hampton Street.

For to artists a banquet's a God-send so rare,
 (With their cold conversations,* and that kind of fare,)
 They determined at once, maugre trouble and cost,
 That for lack of the *cheek* it should never be lost :
 So they call'd to their councils a man whom they knew
 Could face the world's laughter, and bring them well through :
 To his judgment was left all the toasts and the talkers
 (Tho' they say the best hints were his friend J. E. W——r's).
 'Twas suggested the time should be Christmas,—but no—
 'Twould'nt do to compete with the 'great cattle show :'
 So, dreading a rival attraction in swine,
 'Twas agreed that the *lions* should come down and dine
 When the public, o'erjoyed with fat mutton and beef,
 With a gusto would rush to the stomach's relief.
 They had sounded already the *nobs* round about,
 And some promised venison, and some expressed doubt
 So next they conferr'd as to whom to invite ;
 They ponder'd and dwelt upon this day and night.
 'Twas agreed by a sort of a nodding and winking,
 That none should be in for the eating and drinking
 Except their *own body*, and those who were known
 To be men of large means, the *elite* of the town.
 No matter the worth or the merit—if *poor*,
 They must close to such people the banquet hall door,
 While the coarsest *official*,† dress'd up in his pride,
 Would find that the favour would not be denied.
 The committee resolved, after some hesitation,
 That two, the best fitted by brass and by station,
 Should next be deputed to visit the men
 Who had made the most noise by the pencil and pen.
 They went—and as London just then was *at home*,
 When they threw out their bait, many promised to come.
 They caught some large fish, but the largest of all,
 Compar'd with whose weight all the artists look'd small,
 Was Boz, the renown'd, the glorious and good,
 Who long as the champion of nature has stood :
 For Dickens is one of those good sort of fellows
 Whom to know is to love—as his pages will tell us ;
 Who glory in giving all causes a lift,
 And to see life's new phases would make any shift :
 He must be the great star o'er the banquet to shine,
 Give spice to the viands, and zest to the wine ;
 To him every head must in reverence nod,
 And his words must be treasured as those of a God ;
 Every speech that he makes must be reckon'd a hit,
 And the laugh most applausive respond to his wit.

* * * * *

* Conversaziones.

† The Mayor took the chair on the above occasion.

'Tis said, o'er the revels as Bacchus held sway,
 The Genius of Art turn'd disgusted away ;
 And some of her sons,* growing somewhat uncivil,
 Seem'd to wish the Boz Banquet almost at the d—l.

Long as the foregoing effusion is, I have curtailed it of some of its proportions, more especially as some of the lines seemed to reflect (playfully, of course) on individuals whom I esteem, not only as artists, but as men. Besides, I have an objection to introduce any *personal* matter, if it can be dispensed with. The thing itself is harmless as it now stands, and will perhaps help to keep up a pleasing reminiscence of the event alluded to, which is my apology for introducing it *at all*.

Perhaps more than any other town, Birmingham has been prolific in artists. In fact, her prosperity has depended upon art, and must continue to do so. Hutton speaks of the "black artists of Birmingham," prior to the expulsion of the ancient Britons ; but I have to notice those of her sons who have distinguished themselves in the fine arts ; and of them she has reason to be proud. She can boast of Creswick, Henshaw, and Hill, among her painters ; Willmore and Roden, as engravers ; and Hollins (the respected Vice-President of the Society of Artists) as a sculptor. These are all living ; I do not pretend to enumerate all that have gone before. But there are those rising among her children who bid fair to contest the laurel with even their metropolitan rivals. Of those I have mentioned, the first four were pupils of the late Mr. Barber ; Mr. Roden, I believe, studied under Mr. Mills ; and Mr. Hollins under the venerable Mr. Lines. We must not, by the perusal of the above rhymes, be led to the conclusion that the artists are, generally speaking, in a position to indulge at such a banquet ; on the contrary, I fear many of them have often to contend with the difficulty of procuring

* It seems the wine was very bad, and that tried the temper of some of the poor artists, who had to pay twenty-five shillings each.

a dinner at all. This is a lamentable state of things, after the flourishing parade above, and considering also the great talent of the fraternity—but I know it to be too true, and therefore I name it only to regret its existence. We must not, however, in fairness, throw all the blame upon the public; it is quite evident that their pictures would be bought, if they would only act upon a just and honest principle. But when a man finds that a painting marked in the Exhibition at £30 finds its way in a short time to a picture-dealer for £3, he is apt to conclude that had he bought it at the first price (as he perhaps thought of doing) he would have been robbed of £27.* Thus, much of their poverty is traceable to a want of principle in themselves.

The "Birmingham and Midland Counties Art Union" is still in existence, after many struggles for life, since it lost its devoted and enthusiastic friend, Captain Van Bearle, its late excellent Secretary. It is now carried on in the rooms of the Society of Artists, and seems to depend on their exhibition and exertions for support. The last report was, if I recollect rightly, rather of a cheering nature.

There is a life academy connected with the Society of Artists, at which the students have the great advantage of drawing from the living figure; this, I believe, is conducted by the excellent secretary, Mr. H. Harris.

NOTE XXIV.

The man of letters lived—

This was the celebrated John Baskerville, a man of letters in a double sense, for he not only cultivated literature, but was one of the first and most successful type-founders. He was a native of Worcestershire, and was in succession a stone-cutter, a schoolmaster, a japanner, and lastly, an eminent type-founder and printer. Hutton, his biographer, observes

* I have known more than one instance of *dodging* (to use a sporting phrase,) like the above.

that in 1745 he took a building lease of about eight acres of land, to which he gave the name of Easy Hill, converted it into a little Eden, and built a house in the centre, and it was soon surrounded with houses. Here he continued the business of japanner for life; his carriage (each pannel of which was a distinct picture, and might be considered as the *pattern-card* of his trade) was drawn by a beautiful pair of cream-coloured horses. His inclination for letters induced him, in 1750, to turn his thoughts to the press. His first attempt, in 1756, was a quarto edition of Virgil; this he is said to have reprinted in 1758, and was employed by the University of Oxford upon an entirely new-faced Greek type. His talents were now generally appreciated, and he printed many extensive works, manufacturing his own paper, type, and ink. He had leave from the University of Cambridge to print a Bible in royal folio, and two editions of the common prayer-book, in three sizes, for the permission of doing which he paid a good premium. After the publication of this Bible, Mr. Baskerville became weary of printing, and endeavoured, though unsuccessfully, to dispose of his type and printing materials. He died without issue, January 8th, 1775, aged 69; and by his will directed his body to be buried in a conical building on his own premises, heretofore used as a mill, which he had raised and painted, and in a vault prepared for it. A literary society in Paris, in 1779, purchased this valuable property, and expended £100,000 in printing the works of Voltaire, with Baskerville's elegant type. Mrs. Baskerville died in 1788. John Ryland, Esq., made considerable improvements to Baskerville House, which were just completed when, on the 15th of July, 1791, on the second day of the Birmingham riots, they were burned by the rioters, and the conic urn, placed to Baskerville's memory, lost in the ruins. In levelling the ground for the formation of some new wharfs, his coffin, standing in an upright position, and in an entire state, was dug up. Upon opening it, the body was found not to be decomposed, and the teeth had the appearance of being perfectly sound.

In further elucidation of the character of Baskerville, I subjoin the following from the *Liverpool Courier*, of April 30, 1851, under the head of the "Workshops of Birmingham."

"This man, originally a schoolmaster, became an eminent japanner, and subsequently earned an undying reputation by the production of printing-type, for which this country had previously been indebted to Holland. Many things in the character of this man are deserving of admiration. He spent £600 before he produced a single letter to please himself, and so much did he excel in style, that we shall be excused if we transfer to our columns a brief extract, from an estimate of his work by Dr. Dibdin. He says of the typography of Baskerville, that—

"It is eminently beautiful; his letters are generally of a very slender and delicate form, calculated for an octavo, or even a quarto, but not sufficiently bold to fill the space of an imperial folio, as is evident from a view of the great Bible. * * * In the italic letters, whether capital or small, he stands unrivalled, such elegance, freedom, and perfect symmetry, being in vain to be looked for among the specimens of Aldus and Colonaeus."

Baskerville was a large-minded, liberal, and hospitable man. He did much for the progress of his species. He printed a Bible and a prayer-book; and yet he dared to die an avowed unbeliever in the truths of Christianity, and to order that he should be buried in his garden, in a tomb for which he wrote the following inscription:—

"Stranger! beneath this stone, in unconsecrated ground, a friend to the liberties of mankind directed his body to be interred. May the example contribute to emancipate the mind from the fears of superstition, and the wicked arts of priestcraft."

"Here," continues the editor of the above-named newspaper, "extremes meet. So great, so low. The only thing worth having, the hope of the future in a brighter and a better world,—sacrificed by a man of mind, for a dreamy, unsubstantial doubt."

I hardly think the editor of a newspaper has a right to speak in this flippant manner of the opinions of a man like Baskerville. I dare say he died with as little "unsubstantial doubt" as the redoubtable editor himself may feel; and perhaps, if his mind had been entirely engrossed with the thoughts of another world, he would not have done so much "substantial" good in this.

NOTE XXV.

The worthy citizen, each evening hour.

Among the worthies of the past generation, the late Charles Lloyd, Esq., of Bingley House, stands conspicuous. The following notice, gathered from the Gentleman's Magazine, may not be uninteresting to the reader. His family settled in this town in the year 1680, when Mr. Charles Lloyd, of Dolobran, in Montgomeryshire, who was a convert of George Fox, suffered severely from the persecutions then raging against dissenters; and though he had filled the office of High Sheriff, he was imprisoned and his property put under premunire, and he was obliged to quit his family estate, where his ancestors had resided previous to the Norman conquest. Thomas Lloyd, his brother, acted as Secretary to William Penn, in Pennsylvania, and during the governor's absence in England was appointed his deputy. When the old Quakers' burying-ground in Monmouth Street was lately levelled for the railway tunnel, the remains of this Mr. Lloyd, who died in the house of his daughter, which was lately pulled down, at the top of Bennett's Hill, and was interred in 1688, were found little decomposed, and, with those of thirty of his descendants, were removed to the grave-yard in Bull Street.

The late Mr. Charles Lloyd possessed a highly-cultivated mind, and was remarkable for the variety of his attainments, his industry, and perseverance. The intelligence and assiduity with which, as a Commissioner, he engaged in the public interests of the town, and various philanthropic objects of the day, testify alike to the vigour of his understanding and the benevolence of his heart. He was the early and active friend of negro emancipation, and co-operated laboriously with Clarkson and Wilberforce in the first committee of the society for the abolition of the slave trade. From the clearness of his judgment, and, his knowledge of law, he was often engaged as counsellor and arbitrator; and it was his peculiar pleasure to act as peacemaker in some important matters of dispute referred to his decision.

Notwithstanding his numerous engagements as a Commissioner, an iron-master, a practical farmer, a banker, and the head of a large family, he found leisure to devote to literary pursuits, which were to him as a recreation from more arduous employments. The Scriptures and the Classics were his favourite studies.

To the "Gentleman's Magazine" he occasionally contributed translations of the odes of Horace; and at the age of sixty he commenced a translation of Homer's *Iliad*, and executed a faithful and agreeable version of several books of the *Odyssey*.

The General Hospital was the object of his constant interest, and his active exertions largely contributed to raise the funds for its completion. For many years he kept all the accounts with great exactness in his own hand. At his death the committee expressed their sense of obligation to him by calling a meeting for the purpose; and a marble bust was placed, by public subscription, in the committee-room. It was executed by Mr. Peter Hollins, is an admirable likeness, and a beautiful work of art, and was the means of attracting the notice of several eminent patrons to the promising talent of the young sculptor.* His venerable countenance and simple eloquence can still be remembered by many, when seen on the platform, as the frequent advocate of the cause of religion, charity, and the public interests of his native town.

We ought not to omit to mention Mr. C. Lloyd, son of the above, who manifested at an early age decided indications of poetical genius. After having pursued his studies for some time at Cambridge, he went, on his marriage, to reside in Westmoreland, where he became intimately associated with Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Professor Wilson, and other literati, who had chosen the lakes for their residence. He published a volume of poems in conjunction with Charles Lamb. His translations of the tragedies of Alfieri, while

* I have lately seen this bust, and consider it an admirable production as a work of art.

they are considered to retain in a remarkable degree the vigour and truthfulness of the original, are admired alike by the English and Italian scholar. His various miscellaneous productions are characterised by delicacy of sentiment and the prevailing tendency of his mind to analytical refinement.

As active members of the late Board of Commissioners, who disinterestedly performed the onerous duties now devolved upon the Corporation, the names of Charles Lloyd, Pratchett, Theodore Price, John Simcox, Timothy Smith, William Phipson, James James, and R. T. Cadbury, should ever be held in grateful remembrance by succeeding generations, as benefactors of the town.

NOTE XXVI.

Attwood to bloodless victory led the way.

The name of Thomas Attwood is suggestive of the proudest era in the annals of our town. Before his time, Birmingham was celebrated only for its mechanical ingenuity and its manufacturing industry. It is true, it had produced some great and good men, whose talents and worth had contributed to its increasing wealth, intelligence, and commercial prosperity. But it had no political importance, and was not considered worthy of sending a member to parliament. The time had arrived, however, when it was to occupy a position in the political history of the country. The task of rousing its spirit, of advocating its rights, and of urging its claims upon the attention of the legislature, was reserved for Thomas Attwood, and those able coadjutors whom he had succeeded in drawing around him. By a favourable combination of circumstances, he was enabled to command the co-operation of men admirably fitted to second him in his efforts, and to share in the renown of his glorious enterprise. Like their distinguished leader, they had all more or less contended for the rights and liberties of the people, and been conspicuous in the field of civil and political warfare. But this field had been comparatively

limited, and they had moved only as actors in a scene confined in its boundaries, and therefore of mere local significance. Even Mr. Attwood had scarcely given promise of the height he was to attain, or the great things he was destined to accomplish. He had long been known as a man of business, of station, and of sterling integrity, and had taken a conspicuous part in opposing the orders in Council, in conjunction with many merchants of that day. His indefatigable exertions were rewarded by a splendid testimonial, presented to him at a meeting held at the Shakspeare Rooms, at which Mr. George Edmonds presided. He had ably and honourably filled some of the offices of our local government; and when he addressed the public, either as a writer or speaker, it was generally on a subject with which his position as a banker rendered him practically familiar, viz.—the currency. Indeed, he had a public discussion at Beardsworth's Repository (the principal place of rendezvous for all town's meetings, previous to the erection of our beautiful Town Hall) with the celebrated W. Cobbett, when the same gentleman presided. But, great as was his knowledge on this subject, and distinguished as were his talents in general, I believe the secret of his success lay in his power to inspire love and devotion among his adherents, and that he owed more to the goodness of his heart than to the greatness of his mind. From long association with the name and character of the firm with which he was connected, and his own estimable qualities, men had such implicit confidence in his rectitude and judgment, that he had only to identify himself with any movement, in order to entitle it to respect, and to seal it with a species of authority. Thus, when the plan of the Political Union, of which he was the reputed founder, came before the public, in 1831, though it was strenuously opposed by two legal gentlemen of some eminence,* as an unlawful combina-

Messrs. Joseph Parkes and William Redfern.

tion, it was accepted with enthusiasm by the people, after an able reply from Mr. George Edmonds, and also from the respected founder himself. I need not trace the history of this great political association, which, owing to the obstinate refusal of the government reform measure, speedily became the most important institution of the times, defied, with its formidable hosts, the House of Commons itself, and eventually succeeded by the "pressure from without," and by *moral force alone*, in securing for the people the long-withheld right of political enfranchisement. And this was doubtless the grandest period in the history of Birmingham, when she not only achieved a national, but a world-wide celebrity; and while she gloriously struggled for her own constitutional privileges, demanded, in a voice of thunder, *Justice for England*. Who that witnessed those vast assemblages of people, comprising the might and energy of the district, congregated on the heights of Newhall Hill, and summoned like marshalled spirits, by the talisman of Attwood and the tocsin of the Political Union—can forget the emphatic impress of the picture, or hesitate to acknowledge that it is entitled to a place among the most triumphant exhibitions of moral power ever recorded?

These events are now matters of history. But, like all great demonstrations of popular will, they evoked a spirit which will never again be laid. That spirit lives around us. It pervades the atmosphere of our moral being, and is embodied in the institutions which are springing up on every side. Nay, on the very spot on which those bloodless battles were fought, and the victory of Parliamentary Reform achieved, it would not be difficult to trace the existence of the same spirit, which, taking the form of commercial enterprise, lives in that noble establishment which crowns the hill-top,* like a memorable

* Gillott's steel-pen manufactory. I perceive the people of London are about to erect a statue to Prince Albert, on the site of the late Crystal Palace, in Hyde Park. If this is a just compliment—then it is also a rebuke to Birmingham, for not having raised one to her hero (who

trophy of its renown. Near the site of the great reform meetings stands a sacred structure, in which, for the first time, all religious opinions are tolerated, and men can worship the same God, irrespective of creed. This also is an appropriate edifice for such a vicinity. Nor is the connection between that spirit of freedom which Attwood had awakened, and that which demanded the "Church of the Saviour" to arise, so remote as it may seem. Of course it is but conjecture, but I can hardly imagine that Birmingham, dark and bigoted as it was on religious matters, would have been in a condition to receive and appreciate a Dawson, if Attwood had not previously enlarged our perceptions of individual right, heightened our relish for truth and goodness, and prepared us for the glorious liberties of the soul. This, however, is a mere speculation of my own, into which I ought to apologise for digressing.

After gaining the Reform Bill, Mr. Attwood was everywhere received with acclamation and rejoicing. He was complimented by some of the chief members of the Reform cabinet, congratulated by the city of London, which presented to him her freedom, and returning to Birmingham, made a public and triumphant entry into the town, amid the waving of banners, the joyous sounds of music, and the shouts of welcome from his excited and countless followers. He was soon after returned to Parliament for our newly-enfranchised borough, in conjunction with the late Joshua Scholefield, Esq., and I recollect the two members were publicly paraded through the town, in a handsome chariot drawn by four horses, and preceded by a band of music. Mr. Attwood sat in the House of Commons seven years, when, seeing the corruption that existed, even after the Reform Bill, and the factious combinations that were ever forming against the interests and welfare of the

was greater than Nelson) on Newhall Hill, especially when we consider that but for his obtaining the "Reform Bill," we should in all probability have been without Free Trade, and those prosperous circumstances which culminated in the Great Exhibition of 1851.

people, he despaired of carrying those measures that he deemed so essential to the peace and happiness of the country, and therefore retired in disgust, about the year 1838. He soon after, in consequence of the rise of chartism, and the disgraceful conduct of some of the pseudo-leaders of the people, withdrew altogether from public life; and now, after a brilliant and somewhat stormy career, he still lives, aged, shattered, and feeble, but in the enjoyment of that serenity of mind which is the reward of an honest and upright heart. May his end be peace!

Before I conclude this article, I ought perhaps to notice a few of the more prominent colleagues of Mr. Attwood, most of whom, like himself, are still living. Mr. Muntz, as every one knows, was long connected with the Political Union, and succeeded Mr. A. as representative of the borough in Parliament, which office he still retains, to the entire satisfaction of his constituents. Mr. George Edmonds is perhaps the oldest and ablest reformer we ever had in Birmingham; he saw when very young the anomalies of our political constitution, and had the courage to condemn (though to be honest, *at that time*, was sure to bring its punishment) whatever he knew to be wrong. He attached himself to the old radical party, before reform came into fashion, and like other good men was scouted and despised by his inferiors. However, he has outlived his enemies, and now, after sounding the war-note for many years, he has settled down, as "Clerk of the Peace," in his native town, which is at last proud to acknowledge him. He still cherishes the same warm-hearted interest in the welfare of the people. Independently of his great and untiring efforts for freedom, and his increasing professional avocations, he has found time to devote to the construction of a work which, if successful, will hand his name down to the latest posterity. This is the formation of an original philosophical language, which he has been maturing for the last forty years. It is designed as a medium of communication betwixt the different nations of the world; not, however, to supersede any of the existing languages.

Mr. T. C. Salt, another veteran of the Political Union, is in business in Edmund Street, still writes on his favourite subject, the currency, and enjoys the friendship of his old leader, Mr. Attwood.

The Rev. T. M. Macdonnell, a Roman Catholic Priest, is, I believe, still living in Devonshire, having left this town (it is said) in some disgrace. He was an able man, and distinguished himself in a discussion, held at Mount Zion Chapel, with the Rev. John Burnett, now of London. He was also a friend of the late Daniel O'Connell, M.P., "for Ireland," as Cobbett once called him.

Mr. W. Greatheed Lewis, the then editor of the "Birmingham Journal," died in London, some years after the dissolution of the Political Union. Mr. Benjamin Hadley is (as before intimated) in Australia, where Mr. Pearce (another Political Union man) died some years ago. Mr. De Boscoe Attwood is, I believe, in America; as are some others of the members. Mr. W. Boulton is dead, and also Dr. Wade, of Warwick.

These were the chief men.

NOTE XXVII.

And prosper with the venal wink of law.

I cannot find words sufficiently strong to express my horror and disgust, at the sight of those countless gin-palaces which are rising at every corner of our streets. The time has come when we should speak boldly out on this question; and, at the risk of even the violation of a principle like that of allowing every man to invest his capital as he thinks proper, such a growing nuisance appears to me to require to be interfered with. They are the nurseries of vice, disease, and crime; and surely society has as legitimate a right to deal with them as with any other pestilent evil that may arise; and yet we are told, forsooth, that it would approximate to a restriction of liberty to interfere with it. For the same reason, then,

we ought not to interfere with the brothel-keeper, who has as much right to speculate in pandering to our vicious propensities in one way, as the gin-palace keeper in another. Both are social evils, and both in a christian and civilized country should be put down with the strong arm of the law. The magistrates are aware of their bad tendency; they know that almost every case which comes before them commences its history in the gin-shop, and yet they daily punish the poor victims that fall into the snare; but to touch the snare would be, forsooth—to interfere with the sacred right of those respectable poachers who are constantly setting their nets for human souls, and are allowed to make large fortunes thereby. Now, I think it time to deal with causes as well as effects; in fact, I have more pity for the victim than for the seducer; and in this case, tyranny would be almost a virtue, if it had the effect of destroying such an iniquitous traffic, and of putting down such prolific sources of pollution and misery. They are the most detestable and loathsome spots on the page of our present civilization, and call loudly for removal; while their rival ostentation is only adding a dash of impudence to their wickedness. I speak thus strongly, because I happen to be acquainted with instances in which the temptation has proved ruinous to respectable families, and resulted in infamy to both sexes. It is idle to say we should withstand the temptation; if I am able to do so, perhaps my brother is not: and can I be indifferent to his fate because I am safe? or ought those in authority to look on with apathy, when, as they return from church on a sabbath evening, they see their fellow creatures drawn in crowds to their moral death? But not only is no moral effort made to save them—we admit every additional enticement to be held out. We see the increasing splendour, and we hear the hireling instrumentalists desecrating music to the purpose of the devil; and yet we walk on in perfect unconcern. Look at that gorgeous den of iniquity, called the Crystal Palace, in Edgbaston Street, crowded every night,

Sundays not excepted. Do we deserve the blessing of heaven upon our efforts to evangelize the world, when we allow such publicly brutalizing associations to exist. While they do, we are not only the "worst educated," but we are the most drunken and the most hypocritical nation under the sun. These gin-palaces are a modern *refinement* (God save the mark!) upon the old-fashioned tavern. There was nothing of the kind in our fathers' times, though they were fond enough of the social glass, as is evidenced by the following lines of Bissell:—

"Of inns and public-houses there are plenty,
To guess at which you'll double ten times twenty,
When that is done you then may take four-score,
To make the number near, add twenty more."

According to this there were about 500 "inns and public-houses" in the town, in the year 1800; at that time there were about 70,000 inhabitants. Since then our population has more than trebled itself, so that in the proportion above quoted, we ought not to have more than 1,500 drinking houses, especially when we consider the counteracting influences at work, arising from the gradual progress of intelligence which our fathers did not enjoy. How stands the fact, however?

According to the evidence of Richard Spooner, Esq., M.P., taken from the published report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Public-houses, on the 10th of June last,* I find in the borough of Birmingham there are 578 public-houses, and rather more than 1,000 beer-houses, (Mr. H. Smith, late Mayor, states the number of licensed victuallers to be more). The honourable gentleman states it as his opinion, that there is no disposition on the part of the magistrates to discourage such places as gin-palaces, by withdrawing or refusing their licenses. And Mr. Thomas Beggs, another witness, states that he visited a gin-palace in Birmingham, which was considered by the police to be "as disorderly as any

* Kindly lent to me by Mr. John Cadbury, of this town.

in the town, but it *was kept by a magistrate and alderman.*" Does not this speak volumes? This very man of course would not only be able to command the silence of the police, but he might have to decide, as a magistrate, in cases of riot and disorder committed in his own house. This is a strange anomaly, and accounts for the influence brought to bear in keeping up these dens of iniquity.*

And this result we arrive at, notwithstanding the efforts of the Temperance Society, which, of course, has aimed exclusively at the extirpation of this evil. I may here be allowed to say a word on the subject of teetotalism, as I have had some experience in that as well as in some other things. Even if it were possible, I would not wish to see all persons teetotalers. That the principle has done great good all must admit, but I contend that the good is of a negative character, and that it never made a positively good man yet. It lifts the besotted drunkard out of the gutter, and rescues him from his impending fate, but it cannot alter his nature, or make him morally better. The man (if he be worthy of the name) whose nature is so depraved as to allow him to wallow in worse than bestial iniquity, is one whom virtue will never attract for her own sake. He may be lifted out of the dirt, and he may be faithful to his pledge, but he is "of the earth, earthy," and you can only appeal to his reason through the lower passions, in order to work a change in his character. If he sacrifice his favourite indulgence, you must show him that he can gratify another propensity, equally odious, but not so degrading—equally opposed to his spiritual, but better adapted to promote his temporal well-being. Hence it is that so many have no sooner thrust away one monster, than they rush into the arms of another; the demon of avarice succeeds to that of drunkenness. The drunkard turns teetotaler, and becomes a miser;

* Let it be understood that I quote from the printed report contained in the Blue Book, issued by the House of Commons: and I have not quoted the worst, though I hope even this is over-coloured.

he exchanges the love of drink for the love of money; he abjures the intoxicating cup, in order to become sober and avaricious; he becomes a richer, but not a better man, for his passions still look down. It is true his family may profit by the change, but I doubt if society can, for no passion is more self-absorbing, and none more calculated to render a man regardless of social duties, than avarice. It is only more prudent, not more lovely than drunkenness. Instead of being a reckless spendthrift, the man becomes cold, calculating, and selfish. And there are many notable instances in which men who have been cruel to their families when drunk, have been equally unfeeling towards their neighbours when sober. I admit that drunkenness makes man a beast, but teetotalism will never make him an angel. He who could once be a drunkard, must be debased by nature, and however you may modify his affections, they will never be totally eradicated except by some supernatural agency. I do not make these remarks in disparagement of the efforts of the Temperance Society, which I formerly belonged to myself; but only in justification of my assertion that the good they produce is, for the most part, of a purely negative character. I pity the drunkard as I do the thief, and I would place them in the same category; for if you attempt to moralize with either, it will be like throwing "pearls before swine," unless you appeal to their selfish instincts, and then the most you will do will be to make them more refined in the gratification of their evil propensities, and consequently less obnoxious to public censure. The wolf will show his teeth, however you may teach him to disguise himself; and, generally speaking, it will be found that the fear of punishment will go farther with such characters than the force of moral suasion. But with those who first lure the young into the paths of sin—the receiver of stolen goods, the brothel-keeper, and last, but not least, the owner of the gin-palace—I would hold no quarter, but visit them with

the strong hand of a righteous and indignant law. But how if the law continue to wink at such enormous evils, and even our ministers of the gospel, meeting to discuss the subject, coolly separate with the understanding that it is useless to interfere? Why, then, I say alas! for the law as well as the gospel of our self-styled christian country.

And yet, by reference to a printed statement kindly lent to me by Mr. Superintendent Stephens, containing a comparative return of the number of persons taken into custody in the years 1842 and 1852, I find the following decrease: in 1842, 4938 persons; 1852, 3551 persons; of these there were convicted and sentenced, in 1842, 482; 1852, 263; so that the proportion is tolerably well maintained; and notwithstanding the increase of population, and the improved efficiency of the police, (though their number has decreased,) we have the cheering result of a steady diminution of crime, continued indeed through a succession of years, commencing with the formation of the police force in 1840, the date of the first returns, down to 31st December, 1852. These facts speak loudly in favour of what may be called the normal morality of the town, and prove satisfactorily to my mind the disposition of the people to improve under favourable circumstances, and to avail themselves of any opportunities which the increased intelligence of the times may place at their disposal; and therefore it behoves those who are in a position to rule the circumstances which influence the moral and social condition of the people, to put down such evils as Gin Palaces, Music Saloons, &c., and replace them with something calculated to encourage the better aspirations of their nature; such as Libraries, Reading and Coffee Rooms, &c. I am quite aware that it is an unfortunate, almost an hereditary habit, with even some of the more respectable people in Birmingham, to meet of an evening to enjoy the social glass; and it will perhaps take another generation completely to uproot it.

Bnt, generally speaking, I am satisfied that all classes are well disposed, and that even the labouring population would be morally superior in the absence of those temptations to sin which are unhappily placed at every corner, as if for the very purpose of leading them astray. For many years their habits (when left to themselves) have been generally of a harmless character. Gardening appears to have been among the most favourite ones. Hutton says, "A small part of the lands near the town is parcelled out into little gardens at 10s. or 20s. each, amounting to about sixteen pounds per acre. These are not attended so much for profit as health and amusement". This pleasing and healthful habit, so creditable to the taste of our artizans, is continued to our own day. On this subject Mr. Edward Jesse, Surveyor of her Majesty's parks, palaces, &c., says: "Round the town of Birmingham there are some hundreds of small gardens, which are diligently cultivated by the working classes. Each garden has a little covered seat, where the owner has his glass of ale and smokes his pipe at the close of the evening; and here the finest auriculas, polyanthuses, carnations, &c., are to be met with. They are cultivated with the utmost skill and care, and may vie with any produced in this country. * * * * I am assured, that great and deplorable as the distress now is at Birmingham, (1844,) a man would sell his clothes, his furniture, indeed, all that he possessed, sooner than part with his beloved garden." They have also a great fondness for live stock of various kinds; dogs and pigeons at one time were their study, and they prided themselves on their superior breeds in both. Now, pigs and poultry are their delight, in the cultivation of which they are equally successful, especially in Cochin China fowls. All classes are great lovers of music, and this fact accounts equally for the success of the musical festivals, the Monday evening concerts at the Town Hall, and the music saloons. Even some places of worship owe much of their success to their music, though,

as a community, I believe the Birmingham people are extremely observant of their religious customs. For literary or theatrical entertainments they have little taste. I know men who can talk by the hour most eloquently on art, science, politics, or religion, who yet have no taste for, or knowledge of, literature. Others go to the theatre every night, and hardly know whether Shakspeare wrote Hamlet, or Hamlet Shakspeare; and as for admiring or remembering the poetry, that is not what they go for. It is the *fashion* to be seen in the boxes every night. It is indeed a thing to be deplored that even in the pit so few are to be found who really understand, to say nothing of appreciating, Shakspeare. I have frequently heard the most ridiculously inappropriate observations made by well-dressed persons, observations that plainly indicated ignorance not only of the plot, but of the language of the play. And yet those plays were addressed to the mind of a people living two centuries and a half before us. What further proof do we require of the little progress we have made, and of the utter inadequacy of our present educational machinery to develop the moral and intellectual capacities of the people? And yet it must be admitted that we are making progress, though in another direction. I have already shown, on the authority of Mr. Superintendent Stephens, the comparative decrease in the criminal returns, notwithstanding that we have a large population and an increasing number of demoralising temptations held out to the people. I have the same testimony to support me in the favourable view I have taken of the popular mind. He (Mr. S.) states, before a committee of the House of Commons, that the diminution in the cases already cited is attributable to the existing social and moral influences, such as Freehold Land Societies, Cheap Excursion Trains, and the Monday Evening Concerts at the Town Hall, which he represents as being "well attended by the working classes." Other important institutions he has omitted to notice, viz.,

Building and Loan Societies, which have proved perhaps the most successful schemes of the present age for ameliorating the condition of the working classes. They have induced habits of forethought even among the most improvident, and enabled them to see the immense power of self-elevation they can command, by a wise adaptation of their means to a common purpose. The tendency of this institution (**Building Societies**) has been of a most favourable nature. It has given the poor mechanic an opportunity (which never occurred before) of becoming his own landlord by the exercise of common prudence in the use of his limited pecuniary resources. And the infallible result of this self-imposed discipline must have been to withdraw him from pursuits of a mere sensual and unprofitable character. The distinguished success which has attended the establishment of these societies has doubtless materially affected the great body of the people; and it is cheering to see that they are increasing in numbers, and augmenting in strength and stability. Mr. Charles Hinks has the merit of first introducing them into Birmingham, which fact has lately been acknowledged by the presentation of a fitting and well-deserved testimonial. He has risen from the ranks of Temperance into a position of importance and responsibility, and he will no doubt be eventually recognised among the benefactors of the age.

The **Freehold Land Societies** are of a kindred character, and have diffused an equally salutary influence upon the community. They are formed upon the same principle as the **Building Societies**, that principle being applied to the purchase of land instead of houses; but the main object is to invest the holder of the land with the privilege of a vote for the county, as a forty-shilling freeholder. This scheme originated in Birmingham, subsequent to the establishment of **Building Societies**. Mr. James Taylor, jun., has the honour of being the founder of the system. It has had a prosperous career up to the present time, has already influ-

enced the county elections, and is rapidly extending itself over the empire. The united operation of this institution with that of Building Societies, &c., has no doubt materially lessened the baneful effects of gin-palaces, beer-houses, &c.

The plan of the Investment and Loan Company, of which Mr. G. B. Haines is originator and secretary, is based on a similar principle, that "of raising large amounts by small payments spread over a number of years, which has so long been adopted by building societies with the greatest advantage." This society extends the principle to all securities, "whether houses, land, shares, or personal securities," with every prospect of complete success. This, as well as the other loan and money societies, is pursuing a career of almost unprecedented prosperity. I do not stop to give the statistics of any of these institutions, but I can state from personal knowledge that they are most satisfactory. What, then, is the conclusion I draw from the above facts and arguments? First of all, that the town still comes up to the description Hutton gave of it a hundred years ago, as "large, and full of inhabitants, and those inhabitants full of industry." Secondly, that *profitable*, and *not literary* institutions, are best adapted to the practical mind of the Birmingham people; and lastly, that with education and the withdrawal of legal temptations to do wrong, we might yet make this town that paradise which the old historian loved to paint it.

NOTE XXVIII.

Instructing it to wear
Those godlike attributes, so bright, so fair,
Which clothed his spirit's beauty.

Charles Reece Pemberton was one of the noblest spirits we have ever had among us in Birmingham. Though trained in the school of adversity, and subjected by his unhappy position to the scorns "that patient merit of the unworthy takes," he

never lost that gentle and Christ-like character which so eminently distinguished him, and which perhaps won him more friends than even his great talents and fascinating conversation. I never had the felicity of meeting him in private but once, and that was the first time I had ever seen him. It was at the royal town of Windsor, and at the inn, so celebrated even in the time of that wicked King Henry VIII., yclept "The Star and Garter." He had been there some little time previous to my arrival, and I recollect, though it is now some twenty years ago, that the landlord (then Mr. Dash), knowing I came from Birmingham, and having, I suppose, received a similar intimation from Mr. P., was anxious to introduce me to him, though I was by no means so anxious, as he (Mr. P.) was a perfect stranger to me. I therefore put it off as long as I could, on the plea of business; late in the evening, however, I joined the company in the smoke-room, where I was introduced to a very unpromising-looking individual with a "seedy" hat on, and a pipe in his mouth. I heard his name for the first time, but I did not feel much more inclined to cultivate his acquaintance; however, there were several others in the room, some of whom I knew, from having visited that part periodically, and as I perceived an interest taken in the man, (poor Charles!) especially by the landlord, who was talking about letting him have a room to lecture in, I drew my chair towards him, and being at that time rather jocularly disposed, I fear it was almost with the intention of making him a source of amusement, especially as they told me he had been reciting some lines of his own. I wished to hear them, and I soon saw I was before my superior, though he was so humbly attired. I shook hands with him, got him to recite again and again, and then questioned him about his circumstances and prospects. He told me he had lectured in Birmingham, and I then thought I had heard of the name. We became intimate, and I could not leave him; we sat up till a shamefully

late hour, and passed the time in a manner which friend Joseph Sturge, had he been present, would have protested against. I left the next, or rather the same morning, before poor Charles was up, (for he was a great lie-a-bed,) and did not meet him again, except in his public capacity as a lecturer, in which I never saw him surpassed, especially on his favourite subject—Shakspeare. I saw him perform the character of Shylock, at our theatre, which I liked almost better than the popular delineation by Kean; and even now I cannot help thinking it was the most Shakspearean. Although circumstances never threw me again in his way, my occupation as a commercial traveller at that time enabled me frequently to make inquiries respecting him, particularly at Sheffield, where I found he was an immense favourite. He was the intimate friend of Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn-Law Rhymer, and many other distinguished men in that city, who, when disease attacked him, contributed to procure him a passage to a more genial climate. I was not in Birmingham when he returned from Egypt, or I should have visited him before he died; I have therefore gathered all my information concerning him from mutual friends, and also from his public “Remains,” edited by W. J. Fox, Esq., M.P., another distinguished friend of poor Charles.

After his death, an effort was made by the Mechanics’ Institute in this town (to which he had been a great friend) to raise a monument to his memory; and I have a melancholy pleasure in recording the active part taken on that occasion by a kindred spirit—one who, to my knowledge cherished the warmest admiration of the worth and genius of Pemberton, and one who, alas! has since followed him to the tomb. Mr. William Watts, (Surgeon,) the gentleman to whom I allude, died about six years ago, to the great and almost ineffaceable grief of his numerous and attached friends, among whom it was my happiness to be numbered. He possessed a fine mind, a brilliant wit, and a kind and

benevolent heart. I insert the following, from the columns of a contemporary newspaper, because I conceive it will do equal honour to the memory of both men.

MECHANICS' INSTITUTE.—**THE LATE MR. PEMBERTON.**—On Thursday evening, March 16th, after the lecture delivered by Mr. Hopkins, in the Mechanics' Institution, Mr. WATTS, at the request of several members of the institution, proposed a resolution for erecting a monument to the memory of the late MR. CHARLES PEMBERTON, when the following address was delivered :—"I hope, ladies and gentlemen, you will not think me presuming too much in requesting your attention for a few minutes; and if an apology be necessary, I plead the object of this address as involving our common interest and participation—an object that will, I hope, excite our most generous sympathies, while memory, busy with many recollections, shall unite us in heart and purpose; I cannot sufficiently express my admiration of the character, and regret for the loss of one whose voice has so often charmed us with its eloquent music, and whose brilliant thoughts and tender sensibilities fell as manna in the wilderness of this world. I need not mention his name to identify the person—the name of Pemberton must, I am sure, be whispered from every heart. But I am not here to pronounce his eulogy, but to solicit yours, not in a mere fugitive applause, but in a more substantial form, one more grateful to his memory, and more honourable to our feelings. When I saw the notice of his death in the papers, I at once felt what was due to his worth—such a memorial as would be an echo to his own spirit, by awakening and keeping alive the recollections of all those sunlit and beneficent sympathies and brilliant thoughts with which his heart and soul literally overflowed in one all-embracing love to his fellow beings. If we could wish with a cold scrupulosity to analyse the claim which Pemberton has to such a memorial, can we hesitate to reply, that both his personal and relative merits are of that very character which places him among the great benefactors of mankind? Early in life, actuated by that insuperable aversion so peculiar to genius, he abandoned his commercial engagements, and at once and for ever disinherited himself from even the hope of fortune? going forth with no other stock in trade than his liberty, and with little else than his good spirits to clothe and feed him; with a fancy more subtle, and far more baseless than hope, an imagination the most vivid, a taste refined upon the best models and thoughts, stored from nature and studied in the revelation of Nature's High Priest; thus equipped, the wandering chronicler of nature entered upon the world to struggle, as he best could, against "poverty's unconquerable bar," sacrificing the honours and emoluments of society even for the good of society. A poet may drink of the streams of Helicon, but never of the waters of Lethe; thus, every pang of disappointment and unkindness is aggravated by that keener sensibility which not only deepens, but prolongs his suffering; for the poet's heart is not only the most ductile, but the most sensible of impression. Poverty and sensibility are the muses' patrimony; and little else was left to poor Pemberton but the springs of

Parnassus, which even the most rigid teetotaler would soon be glad to relinquish for a grosser fluid. He thus resigned all claim to fortune; a solitary among the intervolving associations of the world, he wended his unheeded way; while thousands, by a contrary and more orthodox means, gathered around them all the luxuries and superfluities of wealth. It is too true, the latter are, conventionally, the higher, worthier, and more respectable characters; but in a comparison of the intellectual and moral influence of both, Pemberton stands alone, as a light set upon a hill. His teachings and thoughts, communicated to thousands, ameliorated and humanised the collective heart of a society that little considered the miseries to which his sacrifice had subjected him. It is thus that we owe incalculably more than we can pay to those men who, leaving the secure path of worldly interest, become travellers in the solitary regions of intellect, and, at the cost of infinite labour and pain, enrich and adorn by their efforts the records of humanity. It is an old saying of Synesius, that King Hieron got more by the poet Simonides' acquaintance than Simonides did by his. But, gentlemen, personally, we owe much to PEMBERTON; he was the poet, teacher, and friend of the poor man—of the working man. There is little doubt but, had he submitted his talents to the keeping of his worldly interest, he might have lived rich, and died amid the pomp and regrets of the affluent. He lived poor, and died poorer, and that rather than desert your cause and interest. He looked upon the mechanics as his copartners, linked to them by birth, life, and death. And do you owe him nothing then?—shall we permit his memory to pass into the night of everlasting oblivion? To raise a monument to departed worth is to perpetuate virtue, while “virtues unrecorded are like sweet instruments hung up in cases, that keep the sounds to themselves.” Who is there that has not felt that deep spirit of contemplation when reading the inscriptions of those time-hallowed monuments in our churches? They are appeals to our better nature, and, amid the tumult of this working world, soften and humanise the heart; and what then would be the influence if monuments were erected to acknowledge worth not merely within our churches, but placed in our public institutions? Remember that “our virtues lie in the interpretation of time”; to withhold or neglect this perpetuation is, therefore, to dispossess virtue of her power. The good of such memorials redounds to the living—not to the dead. “Virtue cannot live out of the teeth of emulation,” and who of us could ever pass such an appeal without that admiration which is itself the promise of virtue? Let me then create in you a desire to uphold the character and virtues of that good man, “whose memory shall, as a pattern and a measure, live.” Poor PEMBERTON! we owe him much more than we can pay or he can now receive. “After life’s fitful fever he sleeps well”; nothing can touch him further. It would, no doubt, be easy to collect from public charity a sufficient sum to erect a tablet; but the object would then be evaded. He was the champion of your interests, and it is for you to recognise and perpetuate your admiration of his genius and your gratitude for a life devoted and sacrificed to your highest good.

The result of this eloquent appeal, and of the subsequent exertions of the committee, was the erection of a plain tomb-stone, in the Old Birmingham Cemetery, on which is inscribed the following pregnant words, from the pen of W. J. Fox :—

HIS GENTLE AND FERVID NATURE,
 HIS ACUTE SUSCEPTIBILITY,
 AND HIS ASPIRATIONS TO THE BEAUTIFUL AND TRUE,
 WERE DEVELOPED AND EXERCISED
 THROUGH A LIFE OF VICISSITUDE,
 AND OFTEN OF PRIVATION AND DISAPPOINTMENT.
 AS A PUBLIC LECTURER
 HE HAS LEFT A LASTING MEMORIAL
 IN THE MINDS OF THE MANY
 WHOM HE GUIDED TO A PERCEPTION
 OF THE GENIUS OF SHAKSPEARE
 IN ITS DIVERSIFIED AND HARMONIZING POWERS.
 AT OPPRESSION AND HYPOCRISY
 HE SPURNED WITH A FORCE PROPORTIONED
 TO THAT WHEREWITH HE CLUNG
 TO JUSTICE AND FREEDOM, KINDNESS AND SINCERITY.
 EVER PROMPT FOR GENEROUS TOIL,
 HE WON FOR HIMSELF FROM THE WORLD
 ONLY THE POET'S DOWRY,
 "THE HATE OF HATE, THE SCORN OF SCORN,
 THE LOVE OF LOVE!"

So much for poor Charles, the "graceful elocutionist, the fiery-souled patriot." The world dealt hardly with him even to the last, in raising no better a monument to his memory; but even that humble stone comports well with the modesty of his nature, and the lowly character of his life, and "he sleeps well" under it, "nothing can touch him further." There is one at least, who will continue to visit his tomb in sadness, and think of the noble spirit that once animated the dust that is enshrined beneath. How great is the mystery of life! we meet once with the man we could love, we cherish the remembrance for a while, as a green spot on "memory's waste," and then, we linger in fondness around his grave. But it is the living man that draws us, and while his spirit speaks to

our hearts, we defy even the emblems of death around us.* And here Charles Pemberton will continue to live, not so much in his written works, which (if we except his "Pel Verjuice") are not of a character to maintain a long popularity, but in the recollection of all who knew him, as the friend of the people, the poet in the highest sense, the lecturer, and unequalled interpreter of the mind of Shakespeare. It is sad to reflect that such a man has left so few vestiges of his greatness; but it is sweet also to know that, although the world was not prepared for him, he did not live in vain, and that in spite of want of orthodoxy, he still lives gratefully in the minds of some, as identified with all that is good in human nature; and reminding them, in the words of another poet,† that "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever."

As I have noticed the claims of Charles Pemberton at such length, I may perhaps be expected to say a few words in reference to those of some others of our townsmen who have aimed at literary distinction. Though I do not expect to find any at all comparable with him as a poet, there are a few whose productions are of a character to reflect credit upon the town. Of Hutton's poetical writings I cannot speak, never having read them, and not having any particular desire to do so; as I believe, with all my admiration of him as an antiquarian, I should never discover that he was a poet. I have already introduced Bisset to the reader (which, by the way, I have wrongly spelled Bissell) and from the extracts submitted, the reader will be able to form a judgment of his merits. Since Mr. B. we have had Morfitt and Guy; and some thirty years ago the late Rev. Rann Kennedy published a poem on the death of the Princess Charlotte, which has been favourably

* "For there is a sense of hearing that the vulgar know not: and the voices of the dead breathe soft and frequent to those who can unite the memory with the faith."—BULWER.

† Keats.

noticed by Mr. Washington Irving, the American novelist. Since whom we have had a host of poets and poetasters, some of whom have written really better things than poor Charles, yet none have drunk of the true Helicon as he did. His very life was a poem; his thoughts, feelings, sympathies, affections, and aspirations were not of this world. He lived in a dream-land of his own, from which not all the temptations of life could allure him, and this made up to him the poetry of his existence. I shall be careful how I apply the word *poet*, because I believe, in its high sense, it is the loftiest appellation to which a human being can aspire. I can admire the chemist, the philosopher, and the mechanician, but none of these have the same exalted claim of relationship to true divinity as the poet. He is the favoured of heaven; but alas! he is also the despised on earth. From old Homer downwards they appear to have been wanderers and vagabonds in the world. The poet's "dowry" is still the same, whether in Shakspeare, the deer-stealer, or in Pemberton, his gifted interpreter. Society proscribes them, because by a law of their nature they cannot conform to its customs, nor be ruled by its foolish and fleeting fashions. They refuse to recognise our laws, institutions, and conventionalisms, and therefore society naturally seeks to trample them under her iron heel. But the poet is not cowed; again he rises from the struggle, and laughs in scorn and derision at his many-headed antagonist. The warfare is continued, and the strongest at last prevailing, the poor child of nature is hurried to a cold and premature grave; often

"Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung."

This is the dark side of their lot, the only side that the world sees or comprehends; but by the beautiful law of compensation, nature takes care of her gifted children, and nourishes them with the richest treasures of her bosom. We only see them in their moments of sadness, of hunger, and of disappointment; not in the wild ardour of their enthusiasm, revelling in the

glorious banquet of God's creation. It is a question if, with all the hardships of the poet's life, and all the persecution and ridicule of an unfeeling world, he is not, by the finer sensibilities of his nature, made to participate in joys to which the vulgar, sensual, and luxurious votary of wealth can never be admitted. Thus he hath his reward, and enjoys a peace which the world can neither give nor take away, but which might be immeasurably augmented through the softening influences of sympathy and social love. Every flower does not yield a perfume, nor does every poet sing; we must not therefore conclude there are no poets because they have not yet uttered the rich melody of their hearts. The music of the lark sleeps in his breast while winter reigns o'er the landscape, but it is still there, to be called forth by the smiles and invitations of nature. And perhaps it is not too much to say that more poets have died in the winter of their struggles than have lived to tell the world the sweet burden of their souls. Shakspeare lived to the age of 53, and sung so often and so well, that

"Nature, listening while he played,
Wondered at the work herself had made."

Pemberton died at 50, content to lie at the feet of the great bard and tell the world the meaning of his glorious strain, without giving evidence of his own power to do likewise; and yet I believe him to have possessed the greatest soul, as a poet, we have ever had amongst us, (for *he* was not a Birmingham man.) Miss L. Twamley (now Mrs. Meredith) I only know through her works, and they are certainly of a character to inspire the wish that I had known her better. Mr. Thomas Ragg has produced several volumes of respectable versification, chiefly religious. Mr. G. L. Banks is the author of some sweet lyrical compositions; and there is something in the modest lay of Tertius Collins which I like. There are some other local aspirants to poetical fame, of whom (myself included) the less said, perhaps, the better. But I am sure they will all subscribe to my position, that rhymes are not necessarily

poetry, and that if it were possible, by some mystical analysis, to extract the poetry from all that has been written in Birmingham, it would not weigh in the scale against those simple but sparkling effusions which the poor, self-trained, and almost unlettered bard of Lancashire* is wont to pour forth, like the caged linnet that trills its modest lay even amid the din of the crowded city.

In short, Birmingham, the great city of manufactories, the emporium of commerce, is not the spot for the muses to resort. And yet they have left their native Parnassus, and descended to meet some of their favoured ones amid the smoke of Manchester and Sheffield. But there are so few that even read poetry in Birmingham; the best of them I fear would throw down Milton for a newspaper, and either would be forsaken for the ledger. We are in fact a business people, and that is not a congenial soil for poetry to flourish in. No man who can be punctual either at business or prayers will ever make a poet; nor will the cold atmosphere of prudence and strict human justice prove favourable to the development of the poetical character; we must therefore be content with our fame as the most ingenious mechanics. We certainly have never produced a poet whose song has been heard; and though I repel the calumny of the *Times*, that Birmingham is "the synonym of bad halfpence and lacquered shams," it must be admitted that, according to the standard laid down, her poets who have attempted to sing, will most of them prove to be *counterfeit*, while I admit the possibility that others may have lived, like Pemberton, without having adequately uttered themselves.

NOTE XXIX.

Now consecrated by the name of Watt.

"Birmingham (says the late M. Arago), when Watt went to settle at Soho, could reckon among the inhabitants of its neigh-

* J. C. Prince.

bourhood—Priestley, whose name says everything; Darwin, the author of the 'Zoonomia,' and of a well-known poem on the 'Loves of the Plants'; Withering, an eminent physician and botanist; Keir, a chemist, distinguished by his Notes on his translation of Macquer, and by an interesting paper on the crystallisation of glass; Galton, to whom we owe an elementary treatise on Ornithology; Edgeworth, the author of various works justly esteemed, and the father of Miss Maria, well known to fame. Those learned men soon became the friends of the great mechanical philosopher, and nearly all of them formed an association along with Boulton and him, under the name of the Lunar Society. So strange a name has given rise to extraordinary misapprehensions. The only meaning of it was, that the meetings were held monthly, on the evening of the full moon; a period of the month which was fixed upon in order that the members (living in the country, on different sides of the town) might have a light on their way home."

In a note appended to the above, we find the following remark:—"It is honourable to Birmingham, then a small town, to have assembled such a constellation of talent in its vicinity."

But the same author goes on to show that even amid this extraordinary "constellation" the genius of Watt shone pre-eminent, and that each meeting of this society gave him a fresh opportunity of displaying that unrivalled fertility of inventive power with which he was by nature gifted. "'I have formed an idea,' said Dr. Darwin one day to his associates, 'of a duplex pen, a pen with two quills, by help of which one may write two copies of anything; which will thus at a single operation produce both the original and the transcript of a letter.' 'I believe I can find a better way of solving the problem,' rejoined Watt, almost immediately; 'I shall think over it to-night, and communicate my ideas to you to-morrow.' By the morrow, the copying-press was invented; and even at

that early period, a little model afforded the means of judging of its effects. This very useful machine, which has been so generally adopted in all the counting-houses of England, has received some modifications, the honour of which has been claimed by several artists; but I can assure you that a description and drawing of it in its present form were given in our fellow member's patent in 1780.'

M. Arago then goes on to prove the mightier claims of Watt as a chemist and mechanician, and attributes to him the invention of the plan of heating by steam, the discovery of the composition of water, (in which, assisted by Lord Brougham, he shows his claims to be superior to those of Priestley, Cavendish, &c.), and the wonderful improvements in the steam-engine. The late Lord Jeffrey, in his notice of the death of Watt, 1819, thus expresses himself in reference to the steam-engine:—"We have said that Mr. Watt was the great *improver* of the steam-engine; but in truth, as to all that is admirable in its structure, or vast in its utility, he should rather be described as its *inventor*. It was by his inventions that its action was so regulated as to make it capable of being applied to the finest and most delicate manufactures, and its power so increased as to set weight and solidity at defiance. By his admirable contrivance, it has become a thing stupendous alike for its force and its flexibility, for the prodigious power which it can exert, and the ease, and precision, and ductility, with which it can be varied, distributed, and applied. The trunk of an elephant, that can pick up a pin, or rend an oak, is as nothing to it. It can engrave a seal, and crush masses of obdurate metal before it—draw out, without breaking, a thread as fine as gossamer, and lift a ship of war like a bauble in the air. It can embroider muslin, and forge anchors, cut steel into ribbons, and impel loaded vessels against the fury of the wind and waves.

"It would be difficult to estimate the value of the benefits which these inventions have conferred upon this country : there is no branch of industry that has not been indebted to them ; and in all the most material, they have not only widened most magnificently the field of its exertions, but multiplied a thousand-fold the amount of its productions. It is our improved steam-engine that has fought the battles of Europe, and exalted and sustained, through the late tremendous contest, the political greatness of our land. It is the same great power which now enables us to pay the interest of our debt, and to maintain the arduous struggle in which we are still engaged (1819) with the skill and capital of countries less oppressed with taxation. But these are poor and narrow views of its importance. It has increased indefinitely the mass of human comforts and enjoyments, and rendered cheap and accessible, all over the world, the materials of wealth and prosperity. It has armed the feeble hand of man, in short, with a power to which no limits can be assigned ; completed the dominion of mind over the most refractory qualities of matter ; and laid a sure foundation for all those future miracles of mechanic power, which are to aid and reward the labours of after generations. It is to the genius of one man, too, that all this is mainly owing ; certainly no man ever bestowed such a gift upon his kind. The blessing is not only universal, but unbounded ; and the fabled inventors of the plough and the loom, who were deified by the erring gratitude of their rude cotemporaries, conferred less important benefits on mankind than the inventor of the present steam-engine."

In the same book* from which the above is taken, I find a report of the "proceedings of the public meeting, held at Freemason's Hall, on the 18th June, 1824, for

* For this book I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. Peter Hollins.

erecting a monument to the late James Watt." At this meeting the late Lord Liverpool, then Prime Minister, presided—as the representative of his sovereign, and the last Sir Humphrey Davy, Sir James Mackintosh, Mr. Huskisson, Mr. Brougham, Mr. Peel, Mr. Wilberforce, and others, bore eloquent testimony to the great talent and private worth of the departed Engineer.

Like other great benefactors of their species, Watt apparently rose at the call of a great necessity, to do the work which was at last demanded alike by the nation and the world. The steam-engines of Papin and Newcomen were no longer adequate to the increasing wants of a great progressive and enterprising age. After many difficulties and disappointments, and much vexatious litigation, owing to the imperfect state of the law relating to patents, "Parliament granted a fresh term of twenty-five years to that of Watt, who now, in partnership with Mr. Boulton, set a-going at Soho those establishments which have been to the whole of England the most useful school of practical mechanics. There the partners were very soon superintending the construction of steam-engines of very large dimensions; and repeated trials showed that, with equal power, they consumed three-fourths less fuel than Newcomen's had done. The moment this was known, the new engines came rapidly into use in all the mining districts, and especially in Cornwall."* Their engines were at first, like Newcomen's, only simple pumps, mere instruments of exhaustion. In a few years the great engineer converted them into agents applicable for all purposes, and of an unlimited power. His first approximation to this end was the formation of the *double engine*, or *double acting engine* as it was at first called. He then introduced the *governor*, or *regulator by centrifugal force*, which, with the fly-wheel, are the true secrets of the wonderful perfection to which the manufactures of our day are brought. Of

*M. Arago.

course since his time many additional improvements and modifications have been made in the steam-engine, especially in those used for locomotion, but to Watt's inventive genius we must ascribe the vast and incalculable benefits that have resulted from its application. Not only did it enable us as a nation to meet the disastrous consequences of the last war, but it has called towns into existence, and peopled them with a happy, industrious, and contented population. "If," says the late Mr. Huskisson, "the steam-engine be the most powerful instrument in the hands of man to alter the face of the physical world, it operates at the same time as a powerful moral lever in forwarding the great cause of civilisation." We are told that "the Archimedes of the ancient world, by his mechanical inventions, arrested the course of the Romans, and stayed for a time the downfall of his country. How much more has our modern Archimedes done? He has permanently elevated the strength and wealth of this great empire. * * * * Archimedes valued principally abstract science; James Watt, on the contrary, brought every principle to some practical use; and, as it were, made science descend from heaven to earth."*

A power equal to that which would require the maintenance of one hundred thousand horses was said to be furnished from the single establishment to which Mr. Watt belonged; and assuming that power to be exercised during three hundred days in the course of the year, the saving arising from the substitution of steam power in lieu of the exertions of the animals themselves, it has been computed, would not be less than three millions of pounds sterling per annum. I am assured that the data on which M. Dupin founded his calculations are nearly accurate; and it was stated by him many years ago that the number of steam-engines in England was somewhere about 10,000. Taking these, on an average, to be equal to twenty horse power each, we have 200,000

* Sir Humphry Davy.

horses acting together for the total force employed in manufactories, mines, &c., during a period of from ten to twenty-two hours each day. The difference of cost between the coals consumed by these engines, and the keep, &c., of the above number of horses, would amount to *above fifteen millions* of pounds sterling annually. And if this calculation were carried further, so as to set before us an annual saving in human labour through the medium of these 10,000 steam-engines, the result would be so prodigious as to be hardly credible. The ingenious foreigner goes on to show that the power of the steam-engines in England alone, which were then managed by 36,000 men, would have been sufficient in eighteen hours to raise the great pyramid of Egypt, which is said to have cost the labour of 100,000 men for twenty years. I have been thus particular in giving something like a definite notion of the actual value of the great invention of Watt, (in which I have been assisted by the work of M. Arago,) in order to show the deep debt of gratitude we still owe to one who subdued and regulated the most terrific and ungovernable power in the universe; and not only rendered it innocuous, but subjugated it to the will of man, brought it into perfect organisation, made it an obedient and useful agent for the furtherance of his interests, and lulled it into the most secure repose under the guidance of his feeble hand. Thus, to use the words of Brougham,* "he enlarged the resources of his country, and increased the power of man." This is a great work indeed for one man to accomplish, (assisted though he doubtless was by the late Mr. Murdoch,) and proud indeed ought we to feel that it was all done in our own immediate neighbourhood. I have lately visited the works at Soho, and was shown the identical room in which the great mechanician used to contrive and cogitate his plans; I approached it with a feeling akin to that with

* Inscribed on the pedestal of his statue in Westminster Abbey.

which the Mussulman prostrates himself before the tomb of the great prophet; or like that with which I remember to have visited certain relics at Stratford, made sacred by their association with Shakspeare. I could not help calling up to my mind's eye the venerable form of the philosopher bending over his task, and concentrating all his great energies on the issue of some new experiment. And while I contemplated the changes which time had wrought around that consecrated spot, and endeavoured to call back for a moment its comparative seclusion and isolation among the barren heaths that surrounded it, when Watt first united its destiny with his own, I was reminded that *he* had been in fact the great enchanter, that these wondrous metamorphoses were only consequent upon the steam-engine, and that the woods of Soho had disappeared, and villas laughed on their site, only in obedience to his own potent mandate. In exploring the sylvan walks called Boulton's Park, when first thrown open to the public, I endeavoured to find the tablet (or its remains) surmounted by an urn, on which was inscribed the epitaph written by Dr. Darwin to the memory of Dr. Small, of Birmingham, who had been the instrument of bringing Mr. Watt and Mr. Boulton together, and who died in 1775, much venerated by both. I did not succeed in finding it, but the words may not be unacceptable.

"Ye gay and young, who, thoughtless of your doom,
Shun the disgustful mansions of the dead,
Where melancholy broods o'er many a tomb,
Mould'ring beneath the yew's unwholesome shade ;

If chance ye enter these sequestered groves,
And day's bright sunshine for awhile forego,
O leave to Folly's cheek the laughing loves,
And give one hour to philosophic wo.

Here, while no titled dust, no sainted bone,
No lover bending over beauty's bier,
No warrior frowning in historic stone,
Extorts your praises, or requests your tear—

Cold Contemplation leans her aching head,
On human woe her steady eye she turns,
Waves her meek hand, and sighs for Science dead :
For Science, Virtue, and for *Small* she mourns."

The urn is alluded to in the following lines, by J. Morfitt, Esq., who is supposed to stand on Key Hill, 1794.

"Where* ruddy pupils, with ingenuous grace,
Display their auburn locks and morning face ;
Compose the dimpled cheek, and, murmuring low,
Ply the brief lesson with contracted brow—
Here from the breezy mount the eye explores
Gay lawns, and sunny hills, and russet moors ;
And distant groves and distant villas rise,
To where Barr Beacon meets the bending skies.
At pleasing distance Birmingham is seen,
Dimming with smoky wreaths the blue serene :
No sounds from whirling lathes the ears assail,
And faint the hammers languish in the gale.
See where, expanding with majestic grace,
Yon larger lake unfolds his glassy face ;
Then, fringed by pendant woods that share its charms,
With modest wave retires, and locks its lucid arms.

Extend the view from watery scenes beneath,
To the brown honours of the swelling heath ;
Where rugged roads dissect the dreary ling,
And the lorn linnet prunes its ruffled wing.
In smiling contrast, by its churlish side
The velvet meads display their summer pride ;
Romantic gloom invests yon Gothic pile,†
Produce of fancy, and volcanic toil ;
Stricken with age its ivy'd front appears
The mimic age of twice two hundred years.
The sweet recess enamour'd zephyrs seek,
And strew the winter roses on thy cheek.

Behold yon mansion flanked by crowding trees,
Grace the green slope, and court the southern breeze :
Genius and Worth with Boulton there reside,
Boulton, of arts the patron and the pride !
Commerce with rev'rence at thy name shall bow,
Thou fam'd creator of the fam'd Soho !

* Winson Green School.

† Hockley Abbey, formerly the residence of Mr. Ford ; then of Mr. Muntz ; now of Mr. Elwell.

Thy magic hand transform'd these regions wild,
 And a new Eden in the desert smil'd.
 'Tis thine to furnish, great as well as good,
 The rich with ornaments, the poor with food.
 Yon cultured scenes, won from the joyless waste,
 Form'd by thy fancy, finish'd by thy taste,
 Proclaim their master's genius ; down the hill
 Dashes, with Alpine grace, the glittering rill.
 Beneath the pressure of the shadowy breeze,
 I see the dim urn glimmer through the trees ;
 To Friendship sacred, and to Science dear,
 Where Darwin's Muse has pour'd th' immortal tear.

Can tasteless grandeur, with fastidious smile,
 Deride the labours of the forge and file ?
 See from the sooty toils what wonders rise !
 Behold yon radiant family of toys !
 Th' elastic buckle casts a silver ray,
 And the gilt button emulates the day ;
 Here sparkling chains in bright confusion lie ;
 Chains, not to fetter limbs, but grace the thigh.
 Beauty, of ev'ry form and ev'ry hue,
 Puzzles the fancy, and distracts the view.
 Well might the mythologic wits agree
 That beauty's wedded to deformity ;
 Here the rude mass emits progressive charms,
 Till Venus clasps her Vulcan to her arms.
 And shall yon hillock screen thee from our eyes ?
 Rise, lowly Watt, retiring merit, rise !
 Erect thy honest front, assert thy claim,
 Illustrious partner of thy Boulton's fame !
 With perseverance keen thy eye explores
 Nature's mysterious laws, and latent pow'rs.
 At length the secret dawns ; behold, at length,
 The engine heaving with augmented strength.
 United glories round thy head shall stream,
 While bubbling boilers generate their steam."

For a graphic and poetical account of the coining apparatus at Soho, as well as of the wonders of steam generally, see Canto First of "The Botanic Garden," in which the poet, among some predictions, not yet verified, has this remarkable one :—

"Soon shall thy arm, unconquer'd Steam, afar
Drag the slow barge, or drive the rapid car !
 Or on wide-waving wings expanded bear
 Thy flying chariot through the fields of air."

Bisset thus pays his tribute to the same inspiring theme :

“ On yonder gentle slope, which shrubs adorn,
Where grew of late ‘ rank weeds,’ gorse, ling, and thorn ;
Now pendant woods and shady groves are seen,
And nature there assumes a nobler mien.
There verdant lawns, cool grotto, and peaceful bow’rs,
Luxuriant, now are strew’d with sweetest flow’rs,
Reflected by the lake, which spreads below :
All nature smiles around—there stands Soho !
Soho ! where Genius and the Arts preside,
Europa’s wonder and Britannia’s pride ;
Thy matchless works have rais’d old England’s fame,
And future ages will record thy name ;
Each rival nation shall to thee resign
The PALM OF TASTE, and own—’tis justly thine ;
Whilst Commerce shall to thee an altar raise,
And infant Genius learn to lisp thy praise ;
Whilst Art and Science reign, they’ll still proclaim
THINE ! ever blended with a Boulton’s name.”

The following extract, descriptive of the steam-engine, is from a work called “ Birmingham, a Poetic Fragment,” by Joseph Guy, published by R. Wrightson, 1821.

“ Reiterated sounds our ears assail !
’Tis Art o’er Nature struggling to prevail ;
The massive metal, stubborn, rough, and strong,
Strives with the artist’s skill to grapple long :
But engines, with their complicated wheels,
Repeat their force, till ductile nature reels.
Arduous the conflict ! still she keeps the field
Of doubtful contest, and disdains to yield !
The pond’rous hammers fall, the lathe revolves,
Till all her pristine energy dissolves ;
While Art the aiding elements commands,
And the rude mass lies passive in his hands.
The artist now his glowing work refines,
Which, burnish’d bright, with dazzling lustre shines ;
Each magic touch elicits some new charms,
’Till Vulcan clasps a Venus in his arms !”

The following is Dr. Darwin’s florid description of the steam-engine, after a suitable apostrophe to Savery, one of its first inventors :—

“ The Giant-Power from earth’s remotest caves,
Lifts with strong arm her dark reluctant waves ;

Each cavern'd rock, and hidden den explores,
 Drags her dark coals, and digs her shining ores.—
 Next, in close cells of ribbed oak confin'd,
 Gale after gale, he crowds the struggling wind ;
 The imprison'd storms through brazen nostrils roar,
 Fan the white flame, and fuse the sparkling ore.
 Here high in air the rising steam he pours,
 To clay-built cisterns, or to lead-lined towers ;
 Fresh through a thousand pipes the wave distils,
 And thirsty cities drink the exuberant rills.

* * * * *

Press'd by the ponderous air, the piston falls
 Resistless, sliding through its iron walls ;
 Quick moves the balanced beam, of giant birth,
 Wields his large limbs, and nodding, shakes the earth."

The following is in allusion to the magnificent coining apparatus of Mr. Boulton :—

"Now his hard hands on Mona's* rifted crest,
 Bosom'd in rock, her azure ores arrest ;
 With iron lips his rapid rollers seize
 The lengthening bars, in thin expansion squeeze ;
 Descending screws with ponderous fly-wheels wound
 The tawny plates, the new medallions round ;
 Hard dyes of steel the cupreous circles cramp,
 And with quick fall his massive hammers stamp,
 The Harp, the Lily, and the Lion join,
 And George and Britain guard the sterling coin."

"If," says the Doctor, "a civic crown was given in Rome for preserving the life of a citizen, Mr. Boulton should be covered with garlands of oak." By this machine four boys of ten or twelve years old were capable of striking thirty thousand guineas in an hour, and the machine itself kept an unerring account of the pieces struck. It is now in the possession of Messrs. Heaton, Son, and Dugard.

Bisset alludes to the "rank weeds, gorse, ling, and thorn," which grew of late where "now pendant woods and shady groves are seen." And it may not be uninteresting to the reader to know that there is a person *living*, who actually recollects seeing the "gorse, ling, and thorn," on the spot

* The valuable copper mines in the Isle of Anglesey, the property of the Earl of Uxbridge.

where now those elegant villas are rising which adorn the site of the once Soho Park. This person is a female residing in the neighbourhood of the Sand Pits: she is 103 years of age, and I have felt a peculiar interest in visiting her. She was born in Worcestershire, and, when she first came, resided in St. Luke's Row, Constitution Hill, when (as she said) "it was surrounded with fields, a little way out of town." She recollects removing still further into the country, to what is now called Kenion Street, where she used to "lie in bed and hear the cuckoo singing in the morning." She was born in the same year as the famous Lord George Gordon, concerning whose riots in London and elsewhere she gave me some particulars. She recollects perfectly well seeing one of his followers confined in a dungeon in Peck Lane, and told me of some errand she performed for him. The old centenarian still retains all her faculties, which, however, of course, are on the wane. I could not help looking on her with a kind of awe, when I associated her with some contemporary events and personages, which now figure in history. She must have lived coeval with some of the great poets whom, in my boyhood, I had regarded as belonging to an ancient date. She had doubtless seen all our local magnates, from old Hutton downwards, rise from their obscurity and go out again, like so many candles succeeding each other. It was quite possible she might have seen the great lexicographer, Dr. Johnson, when a boy, attending his father at his book-stall in the Bull Ring. She remembers the birth of George the IV., and the rejoicing of John Bull, on the occasion of a *Prince* coming, no matter if it were the "Prince of Darkness." As I listened to her somewhat husky voice, it seemed like hearkening to the long-buried Past, aroused for a moment from her quiet sleep to utter the words of Truth for the inspiration of History. And (to use a still more fanciful figure) I could have have imagined as she stood, with her wrinkled face, and withered, attenuated form, that she was the personification of old Birmingham, whisper-

ing (for she talked in a half-whisper, and with the garrulity and incoherence of age) of things that had occurred within the last hundred years of her experience. She has one son, a young dog about eighty years of age, and a number of great-grand-children, who, with a favourite cat, seem to share her affections. When she first came, Pinfold Street was, to use her own words, "the head of the city," and Union Street was called Corbett's Alley, leading to Cherry Orchard (Cherry Street). When I last saw her she was talking of removing near to the Church of England Cemetery.

NOTE XXX.

And Institutions yet unknown to Fame.

The beneficial influence of the many useful institutions for which Birmingham is distinguished, cannot fail to have struck persons who are even personally unacquainted with the town. Within the last twenty years it has frequently been the scene of immense public meetings, but the individuals present have assembled and separated with as much quietness as if they had been attending a lecture on the steam-engine. Such a multitude of persons could not have been gathered together fifty years ago, without occasioning popular tumults, especially when political feeling had called and united them together. The working classes may therefore be most favourably contrasted with those of the last generation. The late Mr. A. Matthews (author of a Tract on the moral and intellectual condition of the working classes at Birmingham, published in 1830,) says that, "previous to the wide diffusion of knowledge among the working classes in the town and its vicinity, whenever trade was so bad as to occasion a deficiency of employment—or provisions were at a high price—bakers, millers, butchers, farmers and others, became the objects of their hatred and vengeance, and often suffered considerably from the depredations com-

mitted upon them, by the injury or destruction of their property. Happily, however, the influence of education has obviated these very serious evils, and such violations of justice and law as indiscriminate plunder and riotous assemblages do not now occur to disgrace the population. Though endued with feeling, they have learned to reason; and consequently their actions are consonant with their improved condition. Placed in circumstances in which their interests are deeply involved in several important political questions, the increase of political knowledge is to be desired rather than repressed; and it is gratifying to know that one of the consequences of their increased intelligence in this respect, has been to render them more peaceable and orderly members of society. In the different branches of the Birmingham trade, the proportions per cent. which materials bear to wages is so great as to be in some cases almost resolvable into the latter proportion. The theories of wages, free trade, &c., are therefore familiar subjects of discussion among the most intelligent workmen of Birmingham; and it is highly desirable that they should have the benefit of all the light which the best information is enabled to throw on such subjects."

The truth of the above observations was never to my mind more forcibly illustrated, than during the late inquiry into the inhuman and atrocious proceedings at the Borough Gaol, for never was such provocation offered to the veggeful indignation of the people. A kind and benevolent old man had been cruelly dismissed from his office as Governor, and his character unwarrantably stigmatised by the visiting *justices*. A monster was engaged in his place—merely because he was known to be a monster—he was allowed to go on enacting cruelties upon the prisoners, which had caused the deaths of some, and repeated attempts at suicide by others. This was all connived at by the magistrates—and yet they are allowed to walk the streets unmolested

and the gaol is permitted to stand as it did before these horrid revelations were published. Here, then, we have a proof of the patient self-control which the working classes have learned to exercise, and the improved moral tone and temper of their minds. Even in our time, as we know by the Chartist riots of 1839, the people would have been exasperated to madness at such repeated instances of deliberate and wanton barbarity practised upon their fellow creatures ; and the magistrates (for they are the parties most to blame) would have been burnt in effigy, and hooted out of the town. To be sure, expressions of disgust and abhorrence have been pretty freely indulged in by all classes, at the disgrace brought upon the town, but there has been no extravagant ebullition of feeling ; and I have seen the man who dared publicly to asperse the character of the good Captain Maconochie (so superior to his own) walk down New Street, without even a hiss. However, time and public opinion will do them justice, if Lord Palmerston do not ; though they have the indecency, not to say effrontery, to retain the office they have proved themselves so unfitted for, in despite of all. It is right, however, that they should see that though we cannot inflict the same punishment upon them which they have upon their more unfortunate fellow sinners, the accident of their magisterial position will not screen them from merited castigation in another way.*

To return to the all-important subject of education, and of those more beneficent institutions which I trust are destined, sooner or later, to supersede the necessity of resorting to black holes and tortures only fit to be compared with those

* It may be said perhaps that I ought to have noticed the other case of cruelty, in which Mr. Toulmin Smith appeared, or rather *dis*-appeared to so much advantage, but as I think the parties (at least in Birmingham) acted under a mistaken sense of justice, I give them the benefit of the doubt - though I confess I should have liked them better if they had erred on the side of *humanity*.

of Calcutta and the Spanish Inquisition—I am delighted to hail the advent of one which promises to supply the want, so long felt in our town, of a Literary and Scientific Institution commensurate with the requirements of the time. The proposed branches of the Institute, which will consist of two separate departments of instruction, under the heads of a General Department, and a School of Industrial Science, are unexceptionable in themselves; but, as was suggested at the late Town's Meeting, it seems necessary that a system of preparatory or elementary instruction should be embraced in the plan, in order that the pupils, especially children of poor parents, should be fitted to participate in the advantages contemplated by the *secondary* education already announced. I do not think our present educational machinery is of a character calculated to secure to poorer children an equal chance to share in the benefits of the Institute with those of a superior grade; and if so, of course the boon will be to a certain extent partial and exclusive. Still there is much that is admirable and most desirable in the scheme of scientific education proposed by the Institute; and if it is not so comprehensive as we could wish, our efforts must be directed to the establishment of some mode of more general popular instruction, as a supplement to the Institute, by which *primary* education will be provided. But there is one object proposed by the committee in which I deeply sympathise—that of associating the School of Design with the Institute, and thus affording greater facilities and larger accommodation for the increasing candidates in the different walks of art, which is most essential in a manufacturing town like Birmingham. This will enable them to place the building of the Society of Arts, in New Street, at the disposal of the Society of Artists, from whom it ought never to have been taken, as the room is so admirably calculated for their annual exhibition of paintings, which of itself will stimulate our artists, and foster a love of art, which we will hope is already

created in the minds of our citizens. For I am one of those who believe in the humanising tendency of such exhibitions, even on those uninitiated in the mysteries of art; and for this reason I thank the Society of Artists, in the name of the people, for opening the doors of their exhibition to the working classes at a price which they can compass; and I trust, from the success which has so far attended the experiment, that they will be induced to render it still more easy of access, and that for a longer period.

I adverted in a former note to the deteriorating influence of certain establishments on the morals of the town, and of the countervailing tendency of other institutions upon the character and well-being of the working classes. These, however, have pertained purely to economics, and have operated only pecuniarily as a check upon the extravagant and sensual habits they were tempted to indulge in. It is only of late that Birmingham has manifested a lively interest in her institutions of an educational character. We all know the melancholy history of her Mechanics' Institute—of the Athenæum—of the Philosophical Institution—and others of a similar nature. The annals of the Polytechnic Institution have been marked for some years by a continuous struggle to live. It only lingered up to a very recent period, when I am happy to say the combined, energetic, and almost desperate efforts of some of its friends resulted in its resuscitation; and it has now not only recovered its strength, but is enjoying a vigorous prosperity. This improvement in its financial prospects is mainly owing, I believe, to the exertions of its present excellent Honorary Secretary, Mr. W. H. M. Blews, Mr. W. R. Lloyd, and Mr. Hudson. Through them it is rapidly assuming a position as a permanently useful institution to the working classes of both sexes; and until its objects are ultimately absorbed in the Midland Institute, it will no doubt continue to progress. At the end of the last quarter the balance in hand was upwards of £230; the

average nightly attendance of the boys' and young men's classes was stated to be 73, and the number upon the books 96; the female class had also made satisfactory progress. This result, especially when taken in connection with the collateral benefit derivable from the Library and Lectures, is most cheering. Much of its success is no doubt attributable to the general employment consequent upon the improved state of trade, but more still to that increasing thirst for knowledge which has become a characteristic of the age, and will speedily demand larger opportunities of gratification. This has been sufficiently evidenced in the "short hours" movement, and also in the general interest awakened by the late proposition to mix pleasure with instruction, by opening a Crystal Palace in Sutton Park. This scheme, however, I regret to learn, is not likely to be carried out, chiefly through the want of sympathy on the part of the Corporation of Sutton, who have not yet learned to understand what progress means. All honour, however, to the proposer of such a scheme (Mr. Alderman Beale), even though it has failed. The Polytechnic Institution owed its origin, and much of its after-life, to the disinterested exertions of one or two individuals, now no more; I allude to the late Mr. A. Matthews and Mr. Evans, both of whom were honorary secretaries during its infancy, and Mr. Francis Clark, who was on its committee, and who distinguished himself in this, as in every kindred undertaking for the good of his fellow men, with all the zeal of his liberal nature. Long will he be remembered by those who knew him in the different relations of life, both as a man and as a magistrate. Our local community sustained a loss in his removal, a few years since, from the sphere he so much adorned to the distant colony of Australia, where he died last March, beloved and regretted by his family and friends. In my pilgrimage through life I have seldom come in contact with one who possessed, to the same degree, those qualities of heart and mind which go to make up the gentleman. And

feeling thus, I may be excused this brief tribute to departed worth. Here again Death mingles fearfully with our sweetest memories, and imprints his rude hand upon the history of our best institutions.*

And some of these institutions, with all our fondness for gaols and punishments, do honour to our common humanity; I allude to those which aim at the prevention of crime, and the reformation of the criminal. After many ages of cruelty and wrong, practised upon the blameless transgressors of our laws, we are at last beginning to see the truth, which was hidden from the vaunted "wisdom of our ancestors," and to understand that moral as well as physical calamity may be averted by the exercise of common prudence, and the enforcement of our social and religious obligations. Society, like a foolish mother, has been for years blubbering over her refractory children, and perplexed in her desire to dispose of them. At one time, under the impulse of a "wild justice," which I shall call revenge, she hung all that trespassed against her, no matter what the motive or circumstances of the delinquent. She flattered herself, in her blind fury, that she should put a period to the reign of crime by terminating the existence of every criminal. But the gaols were still full, and the candidates for the gallows increased. Her passion for blood subsided; she began to reflect; but she still called herself a christian, and never dreamed that she had been committing murder. However, she drew back a little, and mercifully consented to transport her children wholesale, as of course she had a "*right to do what she liked with her own.*" This too failed as a deterring force; for, like the other remedy, it had God's curse upon it, who decreed that society should smart for her folly, and that

*I might have added the name of Dr. Samuel Wright to the list of departed friends of this Institution. He delivered its opening address, about ten years ago.

the effects of her harsh policy should return upon herself in bitterness and disappointment. Such has been literally the case; we know that our colonies have been almost in a state of revolt, owing to our obstinately pressing the refuse of our population upon them. What has been the result? Society sees that she has been pursuing an unwise and an unchristian course in expatriating her children, and she now drops big tears of penitence; but still she is puzzled what to do with them. The truth is at last forcing itself upon her slowly-opening eyes; she begins to see that it may even be safer to stem the torrent at its source, and to deal with the *causes* of crime instead of its effects. Now, therefore, she is preparing to expiate her many cruelties, not to say crimes, by doing what is simply an act of justice to her children. It was proved to demonstration that punishment did not deter from the commission of crime. The children of Poverty and Ignorance, shut out by our cold civilisation from sympathy and association, had no other path left open to them except that which we have all agreed to call sinful. Things therefore had only to take their natural course, in order that the prison and the hulk should be regularly supplied with their complement of victims. Howard and Fry, emboldened by the heroism of christianity, visited these dreadful habitations of woe, and made them less abhorrent to humanity. But still more credit was due to that great philanthropist who, without professing to be a christian, had the courage to be a man. It was Robert Owen, not the church, that first showed the wisdom and practicability of those divine lessons of charity that Christ came to teach. He did not *profess*, but *practised* christian benevolence. He devoted his time and his wealth to reclaiming the vicious from the fallen and down-trodden condition into which the rich clergy had allowed them to sink. And now, after vilifying the man, they are practically content to indorse his fundamental thesis, that "the character of man is made for him, and not by him." However,

"better late than never," and I rejoice to see that, agreeably with the above principle, they are co-operating with every movement whose object is to rescue the poor child of ignorance from the perils of his position—to substitute kindness for harshness—the school for the gaol—and to form his character by training him "in the way he should go." The Honourable and Reverend Grantham Yorke has added to the honour of his name by the active interest he has taken in the project to establish ragged and industrial schools. I am not acquainted with the statistics of these institutions, but I believe they are progressing favourably. Mr. Joseph Sturge, the great philanthropist of our own town, has done something in the same way, and at his own expense; he employed the able and efficient services of Mr. Ellis, that indomitable and indefatigable friend of the child of poverty, who is now, I believe, engaged on the larger experiment at Saltley, which originated with Mr. Adderley, M. P., who munificently presented a piece of land for that purpose. And now I perceive that a conference is about to be held on the subject of still further providing for destitute children, at which some very influential persons are expected to take part. These are cheering indications of the fact that society is at last waking to a sense of its duties as well as its interests; and that the poor orphan and outcast will be yet cared for, at least as far as the present factitious classification of society will admit of. This is, it must be confessed, but a tardy recognition of the *rights* of the poorer classes; but still we must be content and grateful, especially to those whose position and influence enable them almost to command success. And here I must be allowed to bear my humble testimony to the general and active concern manifested by our worthy Recorder on this and kindred subjects. From his official station he is enabled to see and understand the nature of the unhappy position in which the juvenile delinquent is placed, and his great mind and benevolent heart have already prompted valuable sug-

gestions, furnished by his large experience, which will doubtless materially assist in meeting the difficulty.*

I have already noticed elsewhere those excellent institutions, the General and Queen's Hospitals—the first of which is so greatly indebted to Mr. Thomas Gutteridge, for his manly, courageous, and persevering efforts to rid it of some of the abuses that had crept into it. And the latter is under equal obligations to its excellent founder, and firm, devoted, and untiring friend, Mr. W. Sands Cox, who is equally an ornament to his profession, and a benefactor to the town.

We have several libraries in Birmingham, but taken as a whole they are inadequate to the growing wants of the people. In 1851, an effort was made to establish a Free Library, under Mr. Ewart's act; but among the voters the bigots preponderated, and the attempt proved a failure. The principal library is that called the Old Library, in Union Street, which was established in 1779, at the time of Dr. Priestley. It comprises a handsome stone building, with a circular portico. The reading room is circular, and is lighted by a dome lantern, resting on handsome Ionic pillars of porphyry. It was erected in 1798, by William Hollins, Esq.,† architect and sculptor, at a cost of £900. In 1845, the library was enlarged, at a cost of £2,000.

* As the aged poor possess as valid a title to consideration as the more juvenile, it may not be out of place here to state, that some five years ago I proposed a plan, called "Homes for the Aged," by which provision was made for the honest and broken-down tradesman. I have still by me the names of those who kindly consented to act as Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Committee, &c. And as such an institution *must yet* be called for (though the time was not quite ripe *then*), I shall continue to preserve them.

† This gentleman, by the force of strong natural powers, raised himself from the humble employment of a journeyman stone-mason to a considerable degree of eminence in architecture and sculpture. Unaided by tutors, for none were within his reach, he mastered the mysteries of the two professions, and acquired a thorough knowledge of Euclid's Elements of Geometry and Malton's Perspective: this latter he learned from one book, written more to display the knowledge of its author than to assist the learners.

Mr. Saunders, a metropolitan architect of eminence, who was appointed to build the Theatre and Shakspeare Rooms, after the former was first burnt down, employed Mr. Hollins in London, to make the working drawing for those buildings. On his return to Birmingham, he was employed by the town, as architect, to erect the Old Library, the Dispensary, the Public Office, and other works, among which was a public pump, which many of us have seen, nicknamed "Pratchett's Pump," which doubtless arose from the fact of Mr. Pratchett being the leading man in the improvements of the town at that period; and having decided politics, his

Mr. H.'s architectural talents were extensively exercised at Alton Abbey and Gardens, now known as Alton Towers; and many of the neighbouring nobility and gentry availed themselves of his professional skill. His love for the tasteful and beautiful led him to analyse the principles on which Baskerville formed his fine type, and, after twenty years' study, to reduce the capital letters to geometrical rules. He published the result of his labours under the title of "*The British Standard of the Capital Letters*." A copy of this monument of ingenuity and industry I have seen. He also attained a degree of excellence in modelling that few could surpass: some of his wax models of miniature likenesses and fancy subjects will bear comparison with Peter Rowe, or any of the celebrities of the day; and he has left behind him a notable monument of industry and fidelity in copying the works of others, in the models of the heads, handles, and ornamental parts of the metal copy of the Warwick Vase, produced by the late Sir Edward Thomason, now in the possession of G. R. Collis, Esq., but which will shortly be (thanks to the liberality of Sir Edward) the property of the town. It was during the production of this work that his son, Mr. Peter Hollins, our present talented townsman, first tried his "prentice hand;" the flat leaf under the vase being his first attempt at modelling. The late Mr. George Hollins, whose career as a musician was so brief and yet so brilliant, was the youngest son of the above Mr. W. Hollins, who had a family of sixteen children, through the whole of whom was to be traced the varied genius of the original. He died in January, 1843, in the eighty-first year of his age.

I cannot conclude this notice of a family so remarkable for its talent, without expressing my admiration of the last great work of Mr. Peter Hollins. I allude to the statue of the late Sir Robert Peel, which I predict will redound to the increasing honour and fame of the artist, and (in spite of the tardiness of the Committee) be a credit and an ornament to the town.

opponents thought it fair to squib at his principles through his works, and selected for that purpose the said pump, in the following clever pasquinade, which was, in fact, a reply to a long and learned letter in defence of the pump, which had appeared in Aris's Gazette, then a very small paper, the previous week.

“THE HUMBLE PETITION

“Of the Pump in the Bull Ring, to the Inhabitants of Birmingham:—

“SHEWETH,—That your Petitioner hath been a resident in the town of Birmingham many years, and hath always been accounted a good neighbour, and a useful member of society. That your Petitioner, being by nature unostentatious, took up his abode in a narrow passage below the Shambles, where he quietly remained, unnoticed and almost unknown, except to his neighbours. That in this age of innovation, your Petitioner hath found himself suddenly thrust into notice by the destruction of certain buildings, behind which he had for years screened himself, and that on looking around, your Petitioner could scarcely recognise his old acquaintance. Moor Street, who, like your Petitioner, lived in a very retired way, and who was noted for being a disagreeable, close old fellow, began to give himself the airs of a young man, and instead of the dirty garments he formerly wore, shone away in gaudy apparel. That your Petitioner, in his exposed situation, grew ashamed of his old coat and hat, and hearing that a certain ingenious clothier had supplied Moor Street with his splendid habiliments, your Petitioner ordered from him the new garments which he now wears, and which have so transmogrified him, that he is scarcely known by his best friends. That on your Petitioner calmly asking why he supplied a coat of such an outlandish cut, the said clothier broke out into such an incoherent rhapsody, about Basilicas, Lotuses, Papyrus, Pyramids, Fire, Ashes, and Water, Egypt and Greece, departed Heroes, Urns, Statues, &c., that your

Petitioner verily concluded that "much learning had made him mad." That since the said clothier finished your Petitioner's coat, he has dubbed him with the new name of Conduit, whereas the family name of your Petitioner has been from time immemorial plain Pump, which he hopes may be continued, maugre the said clothier. That, although your Petitioner is somewhat stricken in years, he disdains the imputation of having become a *Driveller*, which it is evident the said clothier has attempted to cast upon him, by having affixed to him a slabbering bib, as part of his apparel. That the aforesaid clothier had passed a sentence of *denationalization* against your Petitioner, who is a true-born Englishman, although the said clothier asserts that he is a Gipsy. That your Petitioner is well disposed to live peaceably, but he fears he shall be involved in a dispute with his opposite neighbour, the Statue, in consequence of his having been forced, much against his will, to interfere with the concerns of the said Statue. The truth of these premises being made apparent, your Petitioner prays your humane interference to prevent his name from being changed from "the Pump in the Bull Ring," to that of "*Egyptian Conduit in the Forum*," as proposed in Aris's paper. And your Petitioner shall ever pray."

The playful repudiation of the name of Gipsy has reference to the fact of Mr. Hollins having in his letter substituted for "the Pump in the Bull Ring," the more elegant expression of "the Egyptian Conduit lately erected in the Market Place." And the allusion to being "forced to interfere with the concerns of his neighbour, the (Nelson's) Statue," is in reality a reply to the following words of Mr. H. "I have ornamented it with a representation of the Papyrus, grouped in form of quarter columns at each angle, with Grecian honeysuckles, and with an urn at the top, which last may be considered as a symbol of our departed Hero's ashes, as proper appendages. The Lion's Head is significant of that

Hero's strength and prowess in battle, and of his noble disposition when not opposed to an enemy; as disgorging the water, it is a symbol of that element, for the Egyptians believed water to be the strength and principle of all things. Besides, the Lion's Head is a very ancient ornament for water spouts, and was used in all Grecian temples. The pyramid is also the form of a flame of fire, and within this form (which was that of the pump,) the Grecian and Roman statuaries wrought those sublime and beautiful groups of figures which have been the admiration of every age."

I have made these quotations to show that the pump had obtained at one time considerable local importance and notoriety, which only proves the architect to have been in advance of his time, as many similarly-formed pumps are now to be met with in the metropolis.

The above diverting skit appeared in a paper called the "Birmingham Commercial Herald," which soon after became defunct. Another rival to the "Gazette" arose after in the "Birmingham Chronicle," published by Wrightson, which lived for some time. The Gazette maintained the lead until the "Birmingham Journal" had been established several years, when the latter became the popular paper, and seems likely to remain so. Birmingham could never yet support a magazine, or literary publication, and scarcely supports more than two weekly newspapers.

NOTE XXXI.

Aston, thy noble piles of Church and Hall.

In the north of Birmingham, at Aston, is the ancient seat of the Holte family, which first settled there in the time of Edward III. Thomas was created a baronet in 1612, by James I., and died in his 83rd year, 1654, having founded an hospital for five poor men and women. Sir Charles, I believe, was the last baronet. The Hall is now a mere lodging

house, and will speedily be converted, or rather *perverted*, to some modern purpose, as the park already is.

I had prepared a paper descriptive of the beautiful village of Aston and its associations, but I find I have so far exceeded the limits I originally assigned to myself, in speaking of the town, that I dare not trust myself in any of the suburbs.

ERRATA.

Page 62, eleventh line from top—omit “the” before “town.”

Page 128, twelfth line from top—for “a” read “at.”

Page 187, eleventh line from top—insert “of” after “one.”

Page 190, third line from top—omit “are.”

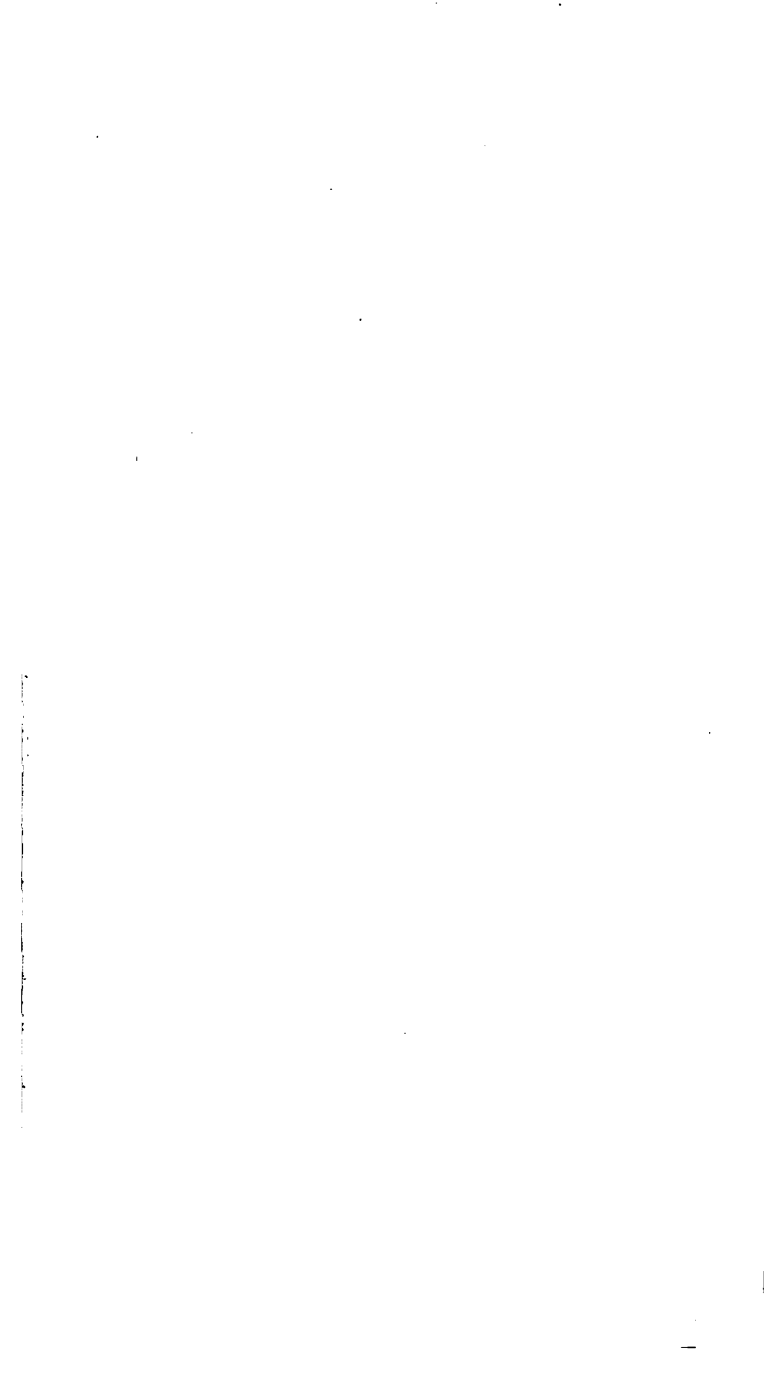
Page 267, third line from top—for “last” read “late.”

Page 275, third line from bottom—omit “have” before “imagined.”











This book should be returned to
the Library on or before the last date
stamped below.

A fine is incurred by retaining it
beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

349-2340
OCT 29 1971
CANCELLED



